A Replicable, Zero-Based Model for Marketing Curriculum Innovation

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Abstract

As university curriculums inevitably change, their evolution typically occurs through a series of minor incremental adjustments to individual courses that cause the curriculum to lose strategic consistency and focus. This article demonstrates a zero-based approach to marketing curriculum innovation. The authors describe forces of change that led them to completely redesign their marketing curriculum, and they chronicle a replicable process that can be used to develop and launch an extensive transformation of an existing program that is focused yet adaptive. The process includes faculty commitment, consensus, collaboration, and compromise; stakeholder input; points of distinction; unifying themes; intended learning outcomes; instructional design; approval; a transition plan; launch; and evaluation and continuous improvement. The authors believe that departments of any size can implement a similar redesign process to develop a curriculum that is strategically consistent with the department's core competencies and focused on learning outcomes that are fundamental to any marketing career.

Introduction

This article outlines a zero-based approach (Paulsen & Peseau, 1992) to redesigning a marketing curriculum that is responsive to stakeholder needs and focused on achieving college-level, discipline-specific, and course-level learning outcomes. The desire to better prepare students to anticipate changes created by globalization, rapid technological innovation, and constantly evolving customer segments and to lead change through the creation of new products, the launch of new markets, and the redefinition of customer expectations led us to completely retool our marketing curriculum.

We begin with a situation analysis, describing the marketing curriculum that had evolved over the years and highlighting the weaknesses that it may share with other marketing programs in undergraduate business education. Next, we review the current literature on curriculum change as well as curriculum development, design, and implementation processes. Subsequently, we outline the process used to develop a new curriculum focused on information competency, innovation, and application. Then, we explain how the program was designed to evolve and maintain strategic consistency and focus. Finally, we evaluate the applicability of the process we employed for marketing programs that are different from our own in scale and strategic emphasis.

Situation Analysis

Our university is one of 23 campuses in a statewide university system. The marketing concentration is one of six concentrations in the College of Business and has approximately 250 students who have selected it as their area of emphasis. Students enter the College of Business after completing 2 years of general education courses at our university or some other institution. Students

take a set of required core business courses across all functional disciplines to develop familiarity with the different concentrations they could pursue.

Table 1 presents the prior marketing curriculum. Students were required to take three core marketing classes and four marketing electives. A review of a number of other marketing programs in the country revealed that our curriculum was consistent with what was being offered elsewhere.

Insert Table 1 about here

The marketing curriculum had been modified periodically in response to industry trends, new interests among existing faculty and students, and faculty turnover and recruiting. Over the past decade, courses were added in global electronic commerce, high-technology marketing, industrial sales, and developing marketing plans. Other classes such as sales management and direct marketing remained in the official university catalog but were rarely taught. Most of these changes were implemented without consideration for the impact on the overall curriculum—new course content was developed independently of existing courses in the marketing curriculum, and there was minimal integration. Periodically, marketing faculty discussed the disadvantages of the existing curriculum and agreed that a complete change of the curriculum would be desirable; however, time and resource constraints led marketing faculty to settle for incremental improvements.

The existing marketing curriculum did have a few advantages:

- Variety: Students could select from a variety of career paths and topic areas available in the marketing discipline. Students enjoyed the opportunity to pick and choose from both different courses and different faculty.

- Flexibility: Numerous elective options permitted students to complete their degree requirements on schedule. Limited elective options could cause delays if key faculty members were missing.

- Attractiveness to new faculty: A marketing curriculum that had a number of current and potential electives was an attractive incentive to potential faculty candidates who desired to teach topics of their own preference.

The disadvantages of this type of curriculum included:

- Lack of focus: The curriculum provided breadth rather than depth of knowledge.

- Faculty workload: Faculty often needed to teach several different courses each year to meet student demand for electives in their specialization.

- Lack of a compelling mission: In the pursuit of providing topics of interest to everyone, the curriculum eventually became generic. It was difficult to communicate a distinctive value proposition to recruiters and other constituents.

- Lack of faculty cohesion: Faculty members were only familiar with the courses they taught and were unable to identify connections between their courses and those taught by other faculty. Richard and Miller (1996) noted that departments should design a curriculum and structure activities that help students integrate their learning across courses in the curriculum.

- Lack of integration: Each class was taught independently, and students were exposed to individual marketing subjects rather than an integrated problem-solving approach to marketing problems (Wee, Kek, & Kelley, 2003). More successful curricula—in terms of student learning outcomes—are structured so that they enable students to build on what they have learned in prior coursework (Terwel, 2005) and give students repeated exposure to problem-based marketing issues that require increasingly sophisticated data analysis and reporting (Richard & Miller, 1996).

- Textbook focused: Because courses in the marketing program were similar to traditional marketing courses taught across the country, textbooks were available and used as the primary learning resource in most classes.

The internal strengths and weaknesses of our existing curriculum led us to perceive a necessity to change. In the next section we discuss the specific forces that drove change within our curriculum, and then we describe the curriculum innovation process that we implemented to capitalize on our strengths and market opportunities.

Change Forces Impacting The Marketing Curriculum

Sergiovanni (1998) identified a typology of five change forces and their likely impact on curriculum revision. Bureaucratic change forces, such as policy documents or external assessment, produce enough change to avoid sanctions; however, the change is superficial and would likely disappear in the absence of consequences. Personality and leadership change forces rely on the vision of a strong or charismatic leader and may result in more substantive change. However, outcomes can be uneven, depending on individual faculty members' allegiance to the

vision. Market-driven change forces endure as long as they retain their market desirability. Professional change forces rely on standards of teaching and learning that are set by individual faculty members and produce substantive and enduring curriculum change. Learning community–based change forces rely on shared values and goals regarding teaching and learning and a commitment to develop and implement new ideas and practices. Comparable to professional change forces, they are likely to produce enduring curriculum change. Four of these forces played a role in motivating change in our marketing curriculum: leadership, market driven, professional, and learning community. Once curriculum change was underway, we found ourselves well aligned with policy discussions at the national level, which constitute a bureaucratic force for change. These five forces for change are reviewed in the following.

Bureaucratic

We began to envision major curriculum changes in early 2004, a point at which policy issues regarding large-scale assessment in higher education were largely dormant. Assessing student learning in college has been on the national agenda since 1990 (Banta, 2006). Pressures to develop a national assessment test abated in the mid-1990s but mounted once again in late 2005 when the Bush administration named a Commission on the Future of Higher Education. By this point, we had already implemented an outcome-based marketing curriculum and had developed measures of context- specific learning. This has positioned us well to lead the college in implementing measures of assessment that make sense in our context. So, although national policy on assessment may be a force for change in some business and marketing programs, in our case, it was not.

Leadership

In an era of shrinking state budgets, the provost asked the deans to take a hard look at programs within each college. Our dean was asked to establish differentiation from the other business schools across the state's higher educational system. As part of this process, our dean met separately with the faculty in each of the disciplines. In the dean's meeting with the marketing department, the faculty was asked to articulate responses to the following: What makes the marketing program exceptional? What gives it distinct advantage over other marketing programs in the state? And how does it capitalize on and align with the unique educational philosophy of the university and nationally recognized programs across campus? This conversation proved to be the tipping point (Gladwell, 2002) that led to the dramatic redesign of our marketing curriculum. It provided the impetus to develop a program that was distinctive, both for our university and for our college.

As noted earlier, the dean held similar discussions with the faculty in each discipline; however, the marketing department faculty was the only one to implement significant change. Why did this conversation tip the marketing department and not the others? We feel the answer lies with the interests and concerns of the people involved, which are discussed further in the sections concerning professional and learning community forces for change.

Market Driven

Change is pervasive and the defining feature of contemporary business (Eisenhardt & Brown, 1998). An October 2004 issue of *Business Week* featured a special report on the innovation economy, pointing to technological developments and trends that position the global economy for

an era of unprecedented innovation (Mandel, 2004). Gaining a foothold in an economy defined by change requires "constant reassessment of how we think about strategy, risk, organizational design, research, product development, marketing, distribution—even the notion of competition itself" (Brown, 1997, p. ix). With businesses facing an era of unprecedented innovation and change, faculty in business schools need to rethink curricula to ensure that education produces graduates who know what to do when they do not know what to do (Campbell & Kerry, 2004).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2005) found employers critical of business schools and the capacity of business graduates to succeed in a changing business environment because of a tendency to underemphasize critical thinking about the external environment, problem identification, and creative problem solving. Moreover, employers have registered complaints that business school curricula have focused on tools rather than qualitative thinking (Ackerman, Gross, & Perner, 2003). The criticisms levied on general business curricula apply to marketing programs as well. Smart, Kelley, and Conant (2003) noted that today's marketing graduates must be "globally literate, technologically sophisticated, and analytically mature" (p. 71). The challenge for marketing educators is to retool curriculum content so that it is relevant to students, who must compete in a global economy defined by innovation and change, and to employers, who engage in state-of-the-art marketing practices (Smart et al., 1999).

As discussed earlier, the marketing department had a history of responsiveness to market forces. Business schools are better known for incremental and conservative change rather than revolutionary change (Cook, 1993; Dobni & Dobni, 1996; Parry, Rutherford, & Merrier, 1996),

and we had been no different in this regard. This time however, we intuitively understood that

tweaking our marketing curriculum at the margins would be an inadequate response and do little

to address the gap between the marketing education currently received by our students and the

marketing education needed to carry them forward into the 21st century.

Professional

A combination of marketing faculty members' own professional imperatives was a key factor in

driving curriculum change. The majority of marketing faculty had experience working for and

continued relationships with companies characterized by innovation and state-of-the-art

marketing practices. Moreover, we had independently embraced project- based learning (PBL), and

the majority of our existing courses already relied heavily on PBL and experiential learning. We

naturally gravitated toward discussions that focused on what we wanted our students to be able to

do instead of what they should know.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Through regular dialog over the curriculum development process described in the following, shared

perspectives and values evolved. We began to chart new ideas and developed a vision and

architecture for the marketing curriculum that capitalized on engaged learning and that would

lead to enhanced opportunities for our students as well as increased opportunities for professional

development. For us as a faculty community, the process of curriculum revision was ultimately

transformational.

These five forces may be more or less present in any business school environment. At the very least, the bureaucratic and market-driven forces identified previously impact all business education in the United States and therefore provide motivation for change. As the pressures to reshape business education mount, it seems timely to share a replicable process of marketing curriculum change that is not only instructive but also inspirational.

Curriculum Innovation: A Replicable Process

Graduating students that possess the knowledge and capabilities required by a global innovation economy is within the reach of any marketing faculty—but it requires bold curriculum change rather than timid extensions (Cook, 1993). Bold and effective change requires stakeholder input, faculty involvement and leadership, strong support from the college for the work, and a commitment to continuous improvement (Albrecht, Clark, Smith, Stocks, & Woodfield, 1994; Cheng, 1994; Cohen, Fetters, & Fleischman, 2005; Cook, 1993; Evans, 1957; Richard & Miller, 1996). Paulsen and Peseau (1992) presented a zero-based curriculum review process that encourages the type of fresh perspectives that result in complete curriculum overhaul and visionary change. We employed this zero-based process to plan, implement, and evaluate our new curriculum. Rather than form a separate curriculum committee, all five tenure-track faculty in the marketing department engaged in this process as we understood that significant change and effective implementation would require widespread faculty involvement. Although the actual curriculum that was developed is distinctive to our college and university's mission, we believe that the process is applicable to any department that strives to maintain currency, relevance, and innovation in its

curriculum. Figure 1 depicts the zero-based curriculum innovation process. In the following section, we will more fully describe the process and our own experiences during each stage.

Commitment, Consensus, Collaboration, and Compromise

The first requirement for the success of our curriculum redesign was faculty commitment. In contrast to past curriculum revision efforts, the team unanimously agreed to eliminate all required and elective courses from the curriculum and to build a new curriculum from the ground up. This was a difficult decision because each faculty member had strongly held personal stakes in multiple courses comprising the prior curriculum. We recognized however that breakthrough change required starting from scratch. The collective desire to achieve the vision we had laid out was stronger than the attachments we held to existing courses and pedagogical approaches. Even so, we were continually challenged to abandon past practices, and we quickly learned that a zero-based approach (Paulsen & Peseau, 1992) required starting from scratch not only with the courses comprising the curriculum but also with our own preferences and beliefs. Each faculty member devoted considerable time and effort to the process. We began discussing the new curriculum in the fall of 2004 and invested a significant number of hours to meetings and course design work during the next 2 regular school years and during the summer term in 2005.

The second requirement was faculty consensus. We agreed to reach consensus on every significant aspect of the curriculum, including the general description of each new course, the learning objectives, and the activities and materials that would be used to facilitate learning in each course. Requiring consensus among five diverse faculty members was time- consuming and challenging, but the final product represented a curriculum that every faculty member could

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support. Furthermore, discussions leading to consensus provided opportunities to leverage learning and expertise, develop shared meaning, build community, and identify opportunities for professional development.

The third requirement was collaboration. Together, all marketing faculty discussed and agreed on 20 topics (assuming a 10-week quarter, with two 2-hour class meetings per week), representing critical competencies for each course. Once this was accomplished, teams of two to three faculty members were given the lead role in constructing the day-to- day topics, materials, and learning activities for each course in the new curriculum. Teams were formed to capitalize on the expertise and interests of individual faculty members. Maximum use of faculty talent is a necessary condition for effective curriculum change (Evans, 1957). Once their work was completed, these smaller teams presented their results to the entire marketing faculty for feedback. Every tenure-track faculty member was given the opportunity to provide input on the course plans. This promoted responsibility and accountability to our colleagues as well as commitment and support for the results (Cheng, 1994).

The fourth and most challenging requirement was compromise. As noted earlier, faculty agreed to allow courses relating to their own specific interests and expertise to be eliminated to develop a curriculum that focused on the unifying themes that emerged in our planning and analysis. To gain consensus on learning objectives, activities, and materials, faculty also compromised by learning to use new methods, materials, and approaches rather than relying on what they were most familiar with from prior use.

Stakeholder Input

Every member of the marketing faculty initiated discussions with constituents about the current and desired state of marketing education in our department. We solicited input from recruiters for large, medium, and small companies; alumni; and other industry contacts to identify critical trends in marketing and the requisite skills that these trends demanded. We also spoke with recent graduates about their perceptions of the existing curriculum.

In the process of our discussions, we made four primary discoveries:

- Both small and large firms were increasingly dependent on information and data analysis for their daily operations and strategic decision making.

- Our marketing graduates were finding jobs in a wide range of professions, from sales to event management. No single employer, industry, or job title accounted for more than 5% of our alumni profile.

- Creativity and innovation were of universal importance within the marketing discipline regardless of industry or job title.

- Recruiters and alumni consistently conveyed to us that one of the distinctive strengths of our current marketing graduates was the practical experience they had gained through our project- based classes, particularly projects involving actual clients.

Based on the input we received from constituents and the marketing department faculty's combined 58 years of teaching experience, we agreed that the new marketing curriculum should meet the following points of distinction.

Points of Distinction

1. Mission driven: AACSB Standard 16 requires that mission- driven competencies be developed for business graduates. We wanted our curriculum to not only achieve the department's mission but also the college's and the university's.

2. Focused: Because our students pursued such a diversity of careers upon graduation, we wanted our curriculum to develop life-long learning capabilities that would contribute toward success in any marketing career. For example, we eliminated the personal selling class from our curriculum but incorporated many sales-relevant learning outcomes such as communication and presentation skills into our new courses. For students specifically interested in a personal selling career, we implemented a noncredit 5-week sales training and competition program to complement the new curriculum.

3. Efficient: We wanted a curriculum that would require fewer course preparations each year for faculty. This would allow faculty more time to build interactive and applied learning and assessment activities in their courses.

4. Problem based: To support the acquisition of skills important to success in business, such as analytics, communication, and decision making, we agreed our curriculum should consistently have students working on problems they would face in their careers. Pedagogy based on experiential learning using application- based exercises, hands-on projects, team assignments, and cases and supported by educational technology is steadily replacing the lecture-based teaching paradigm (Ackerman et al., 2003; Smart et al., 1999), and some universities have completely restructured their curriculum around problem-based learning (Wee et al., 2003). As noted earlier, experiential, project-based learning was already used by marketing faculty and was consistent with our university's learn-by-doing mission. Under the prior curriculum, integrated projects often

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constituted a culminating experience in a course. In contrast, we established experiential and/or problem-based learning as the foundation and focus of all learning experiences in all courses comprising the new curriculum.

5. Regionally relevant: The large majority of our graduates pursue their careers in either Southern or Northern California, often with entrepreneurially minded or high-technology firms. We felt that it was particularly important for our curriculum to meet the needs of these firms.

These five points of distinction, taken together with constituent input, led to the development of three unifying themes, or pillars, that would be pervasive throughout our new curriculum.

Unifying Themes

1. Information competency: Companies today are faced with such an overwhelming amount of data that information paralysis can set in. Information is exploding in both quantity and formats. Current estimates are that information in all forms is doubling every 4 to 5 years (Ohio University, 2006). Students who understand the use and application of information will have a strategic advantage over others. Consequently, we agreed that each student graduating from our new curriculum should have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use industry, market, and customer information for data-driven decision making.

2. Innovation: Our proximity to major centers of innovation and growth, a strong engineering program at our university, and the presence of an industrial technology program in our college were three major reasons why we chose to focus on product innovation. Accordingly, we agreed that students must develop the capacity to listen closely to customers; think creatively about solutions to customer needs; employ tools and techniques that generate, modify, and improve new product ideas;

and bring new products to market. Recognizing that innovation in marketing was not constrained to new product launches, we also agreed that students should learn to identify opportunities for innovation in packaging, distribution, and marketing communication.

3. Application: Although courses comprising our prior curriculum employed a number of application-oriented and experiential exercises, their use was not pervasive. The learn-by-doing philosophy is so important to our university's mission and plays such a key role developing students' capacities to transfer newly acquired skills to the workplace (cf. Bridges & Hallinger, 1995; Kjersdam & Enemark, 1994), we felt it was imperative to make this one of the pillars. We agreed that students should be able to apply knowledge of core concepts and skills not only in each course but also in each learning module comprising a course. Through hands-on tools, learning exercises, and integrative projects, students would be asked to appropriately and effectively apply the knowledge and skills they acquired.

Table 2 illustrates how the new courses that emerged in our curriculum match each of the three major themes.

Insert Table 2 about here

With three major themes identified, the more difficult task of specifying and designing courses for the new curriculum lay ahead. As noted earlier, our university's orientation toward learn by doing and our commitment to project-based learning led us to focus on what we wanted our students

to be able to do after they had completed each course and after they had completed the entire

marketing curriculum. An outcome-based orientation led us to seek more information on learning

theory (cf. Kolb, 1983), learning objectives (cf. Fink, 2003; Gronlund, 2004), and developing an

outcome-based curriculum (cf. Harden, Crosby, & Davis, 1999; Smith & Dollase, 1999).

Focus on Learning Outcomes

The marketing faculty decided that it would be critical to establish well-defined learning outcomes

not only for each course but for each day of each course. Knowing what students' capabilities

would be at the end of each day enabled us to build on those skills and competencies not only in

subsequent class sessions but also in subsequent courses.

The six cognitive levels of Bloom's (1984) taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application,

analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) were selected to develop objectives for each course and for

each day of each class. This process was time-consuming, but the extensive discussions between

faculty members on a team were very rewarding. Defining learning outcomes in this manner also

enabled us to develop appropriate assessment techniques for the curriculum (Eder, 2004; Gronlund,

2004).

Table 3 presents some illustrative weeks from two of the classes: listening to the customer and

product management.

Insert Table 3 about here

The course matrices describe the key topic for each day of class, the learning objectives for that topic, and the materials and activities that could be used to achieve the learning goals. Similar day-to-day matrices were developed for all of the courses in the new curriculum.

Instructional Design

With topics and learning objectives identified, the team for each course conducted an exhaustive search for materials. Reflecting our desire to align the curriculum with leading-edge business practice, the group agreed on four basic principles to guide each team in its search. First, each team would identify applied guides and handbooks, written for professional practitioners, to provide the framework for key topics. Primary sources were publishers such as Sage and the American Marketing Association (AMA). Second, each team would seek current readings from trade books and the business press to highlight best practice and to illustrate how companies used the tools and techniques the students were learning. Third, each team would look for video materials that modeled the skills and capabilities students were being asked to acquire. Sources for these included Darden Business Publishing, ABC News Productions, and local marketing professionals. Fourth, each team would seek published cases and experiential exercises that would enable students to apply knowledge and to practice skills.

For some courses, published materials and learning exercises that met learning objectives were available. For other courses, such as listening to the customer, practitioner handbooks and current readings were available, but the faculty team developed and wrote all of the learning exercises. The services of a custom publisher were used to assemble course packs, comprising academic journal and business press articles, book chapters, cases, and other print material. In most cases, these

course packs were significantly cheaper for students than traditional textbooks.

In several instances, the area negotiated special access rights to data sources that met learning objectives. For example, we discovered that the employee training modules used by Information Resources, Inc. (IRI) met many of the learning objectives for the product management course. An agreement was concluded that provided student access to two modules from IRI's online training resource, eSuite: Introduction to IRI InfoScan Measures and Using InfoScan Measures to Tell the Sales Story. As noted earlier, the area also secured videotaped focus group sessions, supporting materials, and reports from local practitioners for our students to observe and analyze.

The marketing department also jointly applied for a grant with the business research librarian to fund development of a marketing information competence Web site that would teach undergraduate marketing students basic information competence skills and provide a framework for introducing key marketing secondary information resources. The Web site provides a self-paced digital learning environment. It enables students to develop critical thinking skills and business intelligence gathering capabilities, which are important in today's information-driven society.

Approval Process

Catalog copy describing the new curriculum, course descriptions, and new course proposals were written and submitted to the Undergraduate Program Committee, which serves as the curriculum review committee at the college level. The program was approved and endorsed by the committee and by the college dean. The program was also reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee

and approved by the Faculty Senate.

Transition Plan

With approvals in place, our attention turned to implementation. For students completing

marketing concentration requirements before the new curriculum was to be launched and for

students beginning a marketing concentration after curriculum launch, no transition plan was

necessary. The challenge was to accommodate students who were midway through the marketing

concentration. To ease the transition and allay student concerns, we approved substitutions from

the new curriculum for students still completing the old. In addition, we agreed to waive the

prerequisite constraints for the first year of implementation so that the more structured flow of

the new curriculum would not delay graduation dates. Next, we generated student awareness by

presenting the new curriculum and the transition plan in student forums such as AMA student club

meetings. Finally, we focused on student advising. We created handouts that outlined students'

options and made them available in locations where students would go to seek information and

advice, including the marketing department Web site and administrative office, the college

advising center, and marketing faculty offices. We briefed college advising center staff members,

who in turn trained the peer advising staff. To reduce confusion and to create confidence in the

new direction we were taking, we took steps to ensure that a consistent message was delivered at

all points of contact.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Launch

On the first day of the quarter in which the new curriculum was launched, marketing faculty members spent time discussing the new curriculum and where the specific class he or she was teaching fit into the curriculum flow. Figure 2 was used to illustrate. Figure 2 presents the pillars and courses of the new curriculum. Although every course incorporated some elements from all three pillars, each course tended to focus more on some pillars than others.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Launching the new curriculum required faculty to teach several new preparations and spend considerably less time than usual on research and other professional development activities. However, many noted the benefits of the curriculum revision experience. The benefits from large-scale change that we have experienced are consistent with those described by Cook (1993).

- The new curriculum affords a better fit with the needs and expectations of corporate customers.
- The new curriculum is more convenient and focused for the customer.
- Faculty members have become more aware of business realities.
- Faculty research has become more relevant to business and enhances teaching.
- Faculty members have reassessed and strengthened their commitment to teaching.
- Faculty members have become more integrated in their thinking about business and their discipline. New sources of resources have been discovered and reinvested in faculty development.

As Cook (1993) noted, not everything works right the first time. Based on our preliminary

experience teaching the new courses and receiving student feedback, we have modified course content, redesigned exercises and grading rubrics, and improved auxiliary learning support such as the marketing information competency Web site. Initial student feedback has been encouraging. Some students expressed disappointment at the loss of electives, and others have resisted the increased rigor of the program, particularly the greater emphasis on analytics. However, the majority of student opinions have been positive and receptive to the focus on data-driven decision making, innovation, and application.

We collected learning assessment data from students in the old curriculum, and we are now collecting data from students who are completing the new curriculum. In addition to student-based assessment, we have incorporated industry and other stakeholders in the assessment process. Once our ongoing assessment system is up and running, we intend to make adjustments to the curriculum as needed to ensure that the learning objectives we established for the curriculum are sufficiently achieved. Adapting our curriculum to student learning enables us to continually improve and innovate while maintaining our strategic focus.

Because our faculty members are covering some topics that are relatively new to them, we are also actively participating in academic and industry seminars and training sessions to retool our skills and expertise. For example, the faculty member who is teaching strategic marketing measurement attended an AMA seminar for practitioners titled *Building a Marketing Dashboard*.

Applicability and Implications for other Marketing Programs

The curriculum redesign process we have described in this article involved a relatively small

department, with only five tenure-track faculty. Although our department represented faculty with a diversity of interests and expertise, a reasonable question to ask is whether this process is replicable in even larger departments, particularly those with subareas of expertise such as consumer behavior, marketing strategy, and econometrics. We speculate that it is possible for a larger department to implement a zero-based curriculum redesign using the process we have described. Why? The process of defining common learning outcomes for a curriculum can serve to unify and integrate a faculty's focus. Our own experience bears this out. As an example, a faculty member with expertise in international marketing and another with expertise in quantitative methods were able to find common ground in designing a curriculum with a learning objective such as data-driven decision making.

The transition from teaching specific topics to achieving learning outcomes was a catalyst for synthesis among seemingly divergent faculty interests. Also, our decision to focus on learning outcomes that provided a foundation for any marketing career unified our perspective. We are hopeful that other departments, even those that have a history of divisiveness and conflict, can find common ground when the focus shifts from what is to be taught to what is to be learned.

The marketing curriculum that we developed may not be appropriate for other programs. As examples, the omission of courses directly preparing students for careers in sales or advertising may be unacceptably risky for other programs. However, we feel confident that the learning outcomes for our curriculum, including written and oral presentation skills and data-driven decision making as well as our direct coverage of topics such as creative strategy and media planning in our product management course, will prepare our students to succeed in those careers. Our zero-based

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process reflects the reality that every department will generate its own curriculum based on the distinctive situation it faces vis-à-vis its mission, geographic location, student placement, and a host of other factors that determine the points of distinction and unifying themes.

Conclusion

A zero-based approach to curriculum change is a time- consuming and exhausting activity. Together with the fact that university administration rarely provides release time or other types of awards for this activity, it is easy to see why most faculty are resistant to making significant revisions. With that said, the rapidly changing business environment, new technologies, an increasingly diverse student body, and constant input from numerous stakeholders necessitate that faculty consider not only small changes to curriculum but also periodic across-the-board modifications to develop a more focused and integrative series of courses. Our experience with dramatic and time-consuming curriculum revision yielded several insights that we believe can assist others who also choose to undertake significant change.

1.   It is critical to build consensus among all faculty members to successfully implement major changes in the curriculum.

2.   After the initial structure of the curriculum is agreed on, breaking the group into smaller subgroups will accelerate the progress.

3.   It is important to keep students informed about the changes and highlight the strengths of the new changes over the existing curriculum.

4.   Additional faculty compensation through supplementary salary or course release time provides meaningful incentives for the time, effort, and retraining that faculty must invest in the redesign process. This inherently requires support from the college as a whole and the dean in

particular.

5. The curriculum should be built on the foundation of learning objectives that reflect strategic themes for the department, college, and university.

As we enter the second year of the new curriculum, we look back on our efforts with pride and wonder. As faculty, we have learned to work together to achieve a unifying purpose, and we are confident that our students, their employers, and our community will benefit from our investment. It is unlikely that our curriculum would have emerged in its present form had we not chosen to completely abandon our former program. Not every department is prepared to embark on a similar journey, but for those who are considering it, we sincerely hope that this article provides some meaningful guidance.
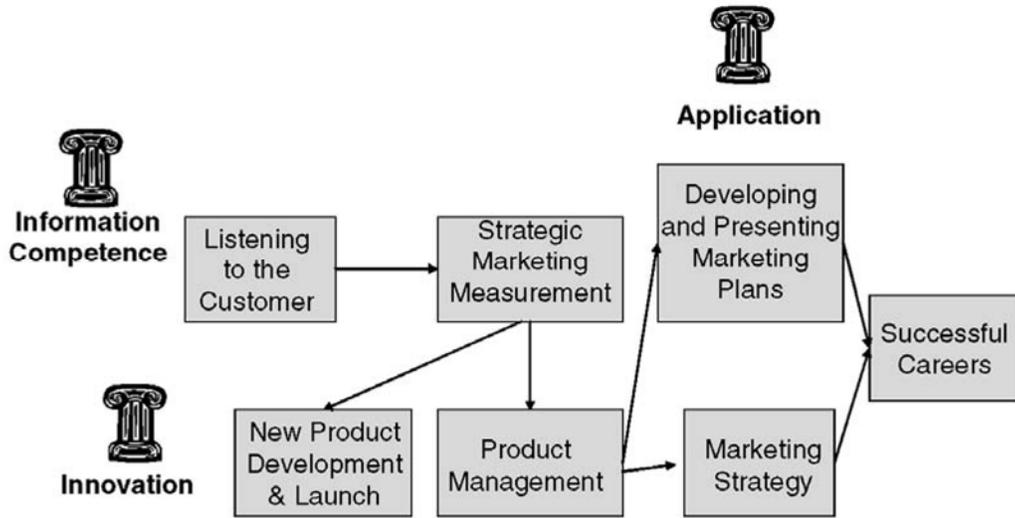
Figure 1

Zero-Based Curriculum Innovation Process Learning Community

Figure 2

New Curriculum Flowchart

Table 1

Former Curriculum

Required Courses	Elective Courses
Buyer behavior	Personal selling
Marketing research	Customer relationship marketing
Marketing Management	Sales management
	International marketing
	Services marketing
	Promotion management
	Product management
	Marketing projects
	Global electronic commerce
	High-technology marketing
	Direct marketing
	Special projects

Table 2

Thematic Pillars and Corresponding Courses in New Curriculum

Pillars		
Information Competence	**Innovation**	**Application**
Listening to the customer: Focuses on building students' capabilities to identify clients information needs and to conduct secondary and qualitative research that addresses them. An integrative project is required. Students learn how to use a wide range of secondary research materials, including Mediamark Research, Inc. and electronic databases. They also learn to conduct one-on-one and focus group interviews and employ ethnographic and projective techniques such as ZMET (Zaltman, 1998).	New product development and launch: This course focuses entirely on the product development and introduction stage of the life cycle. Through direct experience with idea generation tools such as Dialogr (an algorithm-based idea tool designed by one of our faculty members), students learn about the creative process and how new ideas are generated and screened. Students also learn new information gathering and analysis techniques. For example, to enable students	Developing and presenting marketing projects: Student teams consult with businesses and inventors with new product ideas to develop and execute a marketing research plan involving secondary and primary research sources that delivers on the research questions the client has posed. All projects require students to develop a set of recommen-dations that can be acted on and/or implemented by the client, and many require students to develop marketing communication materials.

Finally, they learn to develop and design effective surveys. Survey implementation and data analysis are covered in the subsequent course, strategic marketing measurement.	to develop and test product concepts, they receive hands-on experience using conjoint and perceptual mapping software.	
Strategic marketing measurement: Students learn to identify and use critical marketing metrics, such as customer profitability, customer lifetime value, and brand equity. Students learn a variety of analytical approaches, including descriptive statistics, regression, decision tree analysis, perceptual mapping, and conjoint to measure, evaluate, and optimize a firms marketing dashboard (McGovern, Court, Quelch, &	Product management: Including a separate new product development course in the curriculum enabled us to provide more in-depth coverage of strategic product decisions during the growth, maturity, and decline stages of the product life cycle. Media Flight Plan (Martin & Coons, 2005), IRI eSuite (Information Resources, 2006), and numerous case studies are primarily used as learning materials in this course.	Marketing management: Students integrate marketing strategy with business strategy and experience the interrelationships between key marketing decisions and their effects on marketing metrics. A comprehensive simulation such as Markstrat (Larreche & Gatignon, 1997) is often used. Through intensive "CEO Briefings," teams of students are challenged to explain, evaluate, and defend their respective strategies in the

Crawford, 2004).		simulation.
NOTE: ZMET = Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique.		

Table 3

Selected Portion of Marketing Course Matrices

Course	Week-Day	Key Topic	Learning Outcomes	Activities (A) and Materials (M)
Listening to the customer	5-1	Focus groups: analysis and drawing conclusions	Interpret a focus group transcript and video, draw conclusions and make recommendations.	A: Group presentations: reconciling conflicting interpretations
			Identify and derive meaning from important nonverbal cues.	Lecture: How do the pros do it? / Talk about approaches and frameworks for interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.
				M: *The Focus Group Research Handbook*
	6-2	Projective techniques: What are they?	List and describe the different types of projective techniques	A: Lecture/discussion: Why is it that we use a projective technique?

			Recognize the types of situations where projective techniques are effective.	A: Homework: Nestle case
			Memorize the key elements in a projective-technique "research design."	M: American Demographics reading on ZMET
Product Management	1-2	Segmenting, targeting, and positioning (STP)	Conduct an STP analysis	Jones-Blair Company case
			Select the optimal target market	
			Identify the components of a perceptual map	
	5-1	Data-driven product management measures	Establish familiarity with the definitions, calculations, and	IRI eSuite modules

			examples of critical product performance measures including distribution, volumetric, pricing, and merchandising.	
NOTE: ZMET = Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique.				

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