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Preface and Acknowledgements

The Fall 2016 edition of the *M-PBEA Journal* brings together the current trends and best practices of our business education classroom. From teaching professionalism to improving the learning experience, the journal takes us through various components of today's learners and educators. This edition continues to expand the walls of our classrooms to include the world.

As editor of the 2016 edition, I would like to thank all individuals who submitted manuscripts for consideration in the journal. The time and effort spent researching and composing articles shows a true commitment to the education profession and to the professional growth of fellow educators.

Sincere appreciation and gratitude are extended to all those who played a role in the publication of the journal. The expertise that each shared in reviewing, proofreading, and general support was invaluable. An additional thank you to the members of the Review Board of Peer Evaluations who donated time from their busy schedules to review manuscripts and offer their expertise and advice to our authors.

If you are interested in participating in the next *M-PBEA Journal*, the call for papers will be posted on the Mountain-Plains Business Education Association's website, www.mpbea.org. Potential reviewers may contact the *M-PBEA Journal* Editor directly.

It does not matter how long you have been teaching. It is always a good idea to explore new ideas and try innovative approaches to teaching business subjects. We must not forget that we continue to be students ourselves. The journal authors provide insights that allow us to grow personally and professionally.

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Perceptions of Business Students about Fragrance Use in the Workplace

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Business students (n =360) enrolled in a foundational undergraduate business communication course were surveyed about their perceptions of fragrance use in the workplace. While the respondents knew people who are sensitive to fragrances in different ways, these same respondents indicated that organizations should not institute a fragrance-free policy. More than 80% of the respondents found the body odor (excluding fragrance) of a co-worker offensive always, frequently, or occasionally. While females were more sensitive to fragrances than were males (p = < .05), no statistically significant differences were found between gender and perceptions of tolerance for body odor.

Introduction

Intercultural communication expert Victor (1992) asserted, “The choices people make about how they clothe and groom themselves communicates [sic] powerfully on a nonverbal level” (p. 200). Nonverbal communication includes olfactory communication through odors. The power of smell (via fragrance) has been used by marketers for years to influence consumer behavior (Bradford & Desrochers, 2009).

More than 80% of personal care products contain fragrance (Physicians for Social Responsibility, n.d., p. 1). Sensitivity to fragrance use is becoming more prevalent among Americans (Smith, 2016). When employees work closely in a confined space, co-workers’ use of fragrances such as aftershave, cologne, or perfume can be problematic for those who are sensitive to fragrances.

What, then, are the perceptions of business students, who are the current and future business professionals, about fragrance use in the workplace?

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of business students about the use of fragrance in the workplace; specifically, the study objectives included learning:

1. the reported level of fragrance use inside the workplace;
2. the reported level of fragrance use outside the workplace;
3. the reported level of fragrance use at a face-to-face employment interview;
4. the acceptability of wearing fragrance to a face-to-face employment interview;
5. the reported level of intolerance of fragrance use in the workplace;
6. the reported level of fragrance-free product use;
7. the perceptions of fragrance-free workplace policies; and
8. the perceptions of co-worker body odors.

Importance of the Study

Studying perceptions of fragrance use will provide a lens on how business students view workplace fragrances or odors and identify their knowledge of issues surrounding fragrance use. Knowing that fragrance sensitivity may be considered a disability and may require workplace accommodation is critical for current and prospective managers and employees. Such knowledge may assist employees with fragrance sensitivity in obtaining needed workplace accommodations and in helping organizations avoid potential litigation. Employees may contribute to more appealing work environments by recognizing fellow employees' sensitivities to fragrance use and odors.

Review of the Literature

Caress and Steinemann (2009) found that 31 percent of the general U. S. population reported finding scented products worn by others irritating (p. 47). Such persons may suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) and exposure to fragrances in one of multiple forms that may affect their health and thus their workplace performance (Martini, Iavicoli, & Corse, 2013). These health concerns surface because "the chemicals in these products can trigger a reaction . . . , a chronic condition that causes nausea and headaches when sufferers are exposed to even low levels of certain chemicals" (Nelson, 2011, p. 17). In addition, fragrance sensitive people may also experience "headaches; dizziness, lightheadedness; nausea; fatigue; weakness, insomnia; malaise; confusion; loss of appetite; depression; anxiety; numbness; upper respiratory symptoms; shortness of breath; difficulty with concentration; and skin irritation" (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2016, n.p.).

Fragrance use in the workplace has been described as "the new second-hand smoke" (De Vader & Barker, 2009, p. 1; Nelson, 2015). De Vader and Barker (2009) in fact predicted that policies to prohibit fragrance use will follow the same path as those that were implemented to protect employees and customers from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

One impetus for the implementation of fragrance-free workplace policies is the perception that fragrance sensitivity may come under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and fragrance sensitivity or allergies would need to be accommodated in the workplace. While many organizations have embraced the use of fragrance-free polices in the workplace, others have doubted the necessity of implementing such a policy (Senger, 2011). Still others have extended fragrance-free policies or zones beyond the workplace to encompass other public places such as schools, gyms, hospitals, and places of worship (Ugolini, Rossato, & Baccarani, 2014).

If organizations decide to implement a fragrance-free or scent-free policy, the transition to the new policy should be handled sensitively. Health concerns should be clarified so employees will understand the need for a fragrance-free policy and "explain that this policy is being implemented as a result of medical concerns not merely because of a dislike of a certain smell" (Creating a scent-free, 2012, p. 21). The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recommended that employers "inform all employees of the policy and ensure that they know what they have to do before the policy becomes effective" (Creating a scent-free, 2012, p. 21).

While Ashok, Gutpa, Subey, and Jat (2014) studied student exposure to microenvironments of a college campus, a review of the literature conducted by the researchers revealed no study that investigated student perceptions of fragrance use in the workplace. As a result, this study was conducted to fill a gap in the literature.

Methods and Procedures Used to Collect Information/Data

After consulting the professional literature, the researchers developed a 10-item survey that was then reviewed by four knowledgeable nonverbal business communication specialists. Based on expert feedback received from these educators, wording of two items was modified to improve clarity. The researchers piloted the survey to determine if the items were comprehensible and sequenced correctly. The researchers found that no changes were needed as the instructions and survey items were clear to the respondents.

During the Fall 2014 and Winter 2015 terms, students enrolled in 14 sections (n=360) of business communication courses at two universities in the western United States were surveyed about their perceptions of fragrance use in the workplace. At both AACSB-accredited medium-sized teaching-oriented universities, the business communication course is required of all business majors and is an upper-division writing-intensive course.

Demographics

The majority of the respondents were between 22-25 years of age (51%), followed by 18-21 years of age (23%), and 26-30 years of age (16%). Ninety percent of the students were between 22 and 30 years old.

Male respondents accounted for 52% of the respondents, female respondents comprised 43% of the respondents, and 5% of the respondents did not indicate their gender.

About 68% of the respondents spoke English as the first language at home, while 22% of the respondents spoke Spanish as the first language at home. Other reported first languages spoken at home included Chinese, 2%; Greek, 1%; Armenian, 1%; Japanese, 1%; Vietnamese, 1%; Amharic, 1%; and Other, 1%; with 2% of the sample not responding to the item. Of the respondents, 24% indicated they had lived in countries other than the United States for at least 12 consecutive months. About 95% of the students were juniors and seniors. About 52% of the respondents had worked up to five years for a business, while 26% of the respondents had worked 6-10 years.

Findings

The findings section presents the research results organized by research question.

Question 1 asked, "How often do you wear a scented product such as aftershave, cologne, or perfume at work?" Of those who responded, 46% indicated that they sometimes wear a scented product, 33% always wear a scented product; and 21% never wear a scented product.

Question 2 asked how many respondents wore a scented product outside of the work environment. The percentages of responses increased for those who indicated they sometimes wear a scented product to 51%, always to 36%, and those who indicated never dropped to 8%, with 5% declining to respond to the item.

Question 3 asked how often respondents wore a scented product during a face-to-face employment interview. The results were similar for all three categories: always, 33%; sometimes, 35%, and never, 32%.

Question 4 asked the respondents if they believed it is acceptable to wear fragrance to a face-to-face employment interview. Almost half, 49%, responded sometimes. Those respondents who said always accounted for 32%, and those respondents who said never accounted for 18%, with 1% not responding to the item.

Question 5 asked the respondents, "How often have you found the fragrance applied by others offensive?" Over half of the respondents, 52%, indicated that they found fragrance applied by others offensive occasionally, and one-third, 34%, found fragrance applied by others offensive infrequently.

Those respondents who indicated never finding fragrance use of co-workers offensive constituted one-tenth, 10%, of the respondents. About 4% of the participants did not respond to this question.

Question 6 asked the question, "Should workplaces have a fragrance-free policy?" Over three-fourths, 76%, of the respondents reported that organizations should not have a fragrance-free policy. Eight percent of the respondents were in favor of organizational fragrance-free policies, and 17% indicated they did not know whether workplaces should have such policies. The percentages exceeded 100% due to rounding.

Question 7 asked the question, "Do you purchase fragrance-free personal products?" Of those who responded, 73% indicated that they do not purchase fragrance-free personal products. Of the 27% of the respondents who purchased fragrance-free personal products, 12%, indicated they did so for medically necessary reasons; 4% did so to aid the environment; and 11% purchased these products to avoid offending others who are sensitive to fragrance.

Question 8 asked the respondents if they knew anyone who was sensitive to fragrances. The respondents could check all that apply. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage for the responses. Two percent did not respond to the item.

Table 1
Individuals who are Sensitive to Fragrances

You	Immediate Family	Other Relatives	Co-workers	Friends	Other
50 14%	88 24%	48 13%	66 18%	102 28%	2 1%

Question 9 asked the respondents "How often have you found the body odor (other than fragrance) of a co-worker offensive?" Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage for responses. Note that 43% of the respondents found co-workers' body odor offensive on occasion with 28% indicating frequently. About 11% indicated very frequently being offended by a co-worker's body odor.

Table 2
Co-workers' Body Odor Found to be Offensive

Very Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Infrequently	Never
40 11%	100 28%	155 43%	43 12%	22 6%

<u>**Tests of Significance**</u>

T-tests were run to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between gender and perception of the tolerance for workplace fragrance use. Women reported being more sensitive to workplace fragrance use than did men ($p < .05$), which was statistically significant. Further, there was no statistically significant difference between gender and perception of tolerance for body odor ($p <. 25$).

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of the study, the following conclusions were derived:

- About 79% of the respondents indicated that they always or sometimes wear fragrance in the workplace, while 87% reported wearing fragrance outside of the workplace always or sometimes.
- More than 68% of the respondents indicated that they wear fragrance to a face-to-face employment interview, and over 81% of the respondents believe that it is always or sometimes acceptable for prospective employees to do so suggesting that there is some inhibition against workplace fragrance. Perhaps in the workplace people feel slightly more constrained about expressing individuality through fragrance.
- While the respondents knew individuals who are sensitive to fragrances in different forms, these same respondents indicated that organizations should not institute a fragrance-free policy.
- About 73% of the respondents did not purchase fragrance-free products for a variety of reasons. Those respondents who had purchased fragrance-free products did so for medical necessity, to aid the environment, and to avoid offending others who are sensitive to fragrance.
- More than 80% of the respondents indicated that they found the body odor (other than fragrance) of a co-worker to be very offensive, frequently offensive, or occasionally offensive.
- Women appear to be more sensitive to workplace fragrance use than do men as evidenced by the statistically significant reported difference in fragrance tolerance.
- Both women and men report about the same tolerance for body odor in the workplace.

Recommendations

Based upon the conclusions of the study, the authors recommend that:

- This research study be replicated at other universities throughout the United States. Such a replication could help to determine if regional differences exist in the perceptions of workplace fragrance use.
- This research study be replicated with an international audience to compare and contrast its findings with the findings of this reported study to determine any effect of culture on fragrance perception.
- This research study also be conducted with respondents who are full-time business professionals. Conducting such a study would allow comparisons among different stages of career development.
- This research study be extended to consider the body odor of co-workers; for example, identifying strategies respondents have used to communicate with offending co-workers and the effectiveness of those strategies.

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Perfecting the Professional Image: Preparing Students for Business Dining

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Today's business graduates face many challenges in the job market. Business knowledge and strong skills presented on a resume may be sufficient for an interview or entry-level position. However, employers also want soft skills in their employees that project an overall professional image. Robles (2012) stresses that "Soft skills and hard skills should be integrated to create a well-rounded business graduate" (p. 463). At the university level a concentrated effort should be made to emphasize soft skills for the workplace. It is these soft skills that contribute to a polished professional image.

Introduction

Students graduating today from business schools have adequate hard skills, but are lacking a certain professional polish, according to Jennifer Bechkoff (2013) who developed an online course to teach marketing students soft skills. Bechkoff's research showed that business students often lack interpersonal skills, listening skills, reasoning, attention to personal appearance, and a sense of proper business etiquette, which includes business dining. In fact, according to Dana, Hancock, and Philips (2011), "research from the private and public sector in both academic and workplaces indicates that the lack of soft skills among our college graduates is alarming" (p. 15).

Strong interpersonal skills, though important for new graduates, appear to be an area where graduates seem to be falling short (Robles, 2012). Business etiquette is one of the top three skills lacking among college graduates, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook (Jackson, 2005). Business etiquette plays an increasingly important role in today's competitive global environment, as more businesses are aware of the importance of communicating with those from diverse cultures. Executives who want to have a competitive advantage are advised to devote more attention to learning proper business etiquette (Bass, 2010). Emily Post wrote decades ago, "Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use." (http://www.forbes.com/quotes/2645/, n.d.). However, knowing the correct fork certainly won't hurt your professional image.

Bass (2010) states that business etiquette is part of an intangible quality called "professional presence," which helps an individual develop a competitive advantage in business situations. Because of the increased awareness of this advantage, corporations are now starting to see the value of teaching business etiquette to present and future executives.

Taylor (2003) describes an attempt to incorporate more soft skills in the marketing program at her institution with a new required course that covers both job search and soft skills. The need for this course arose from the result of input from a focus group of marketing employers. Some of the soft skills they listed in this new course included networking and global business etiquette which covered dining etiquette, international business customs, networking skills, and working in diverse groups. In this article we will concentrate on the topic of business dining.

Business Dining

Bass (2010) states, “Your manners at business meals can affect your success in being hired and promoted and in conducting business with clients” (p.60). She goes on to give an example of a trainer from a large bank who makes a practice of taking job candidates to a business meal in order to “observe their etiquette, courtesy, and respect for others during the meal” (p.60). It has been estimated that about 50% of business transactions actually conclude during business meals (Hamilton-Wright, 2004). If this is the case, it is important that dining skills are as professional as other business skills possessed by today’s executives.

In past decades, dining manners were taught at home. However, the occurrence of meals as depicted in the Norman Rockwell paintings of families around their dinner tables seems to have gone to the wayside in the current fast-paced, technologically-driven world in which students now live. Even those families who may be dining at the same table may be interacting elsewhere on their technological devices during the meal. Lessons that may have seemed unnecessary in the last century may be very necessary today in order to have students ready for professional dining; especially as it may be that a job interview could include a dining event. Providing students with the tools to project their professional image while dining could give them an edge over colleagues or, in the job search, other equally qualified candidates.

Students at an AACSB-accredited university were surveyed to determine their knowledge of business meal etiquette, to ascertain their willingness to have training on this topic, and to judge their level of confidence with proper business meal etiquette. Final results showed that slightly more than half of the respondents were able to answer the questions relating to business etiquette in the setting of an interview meal. Less than half of the male students believed that training on the topic was important. While more than 70% of the students expressed confidence in their etiquette skills, the results showed otherwise (Bayless, Clipson, & Muir, 2013).

A similar study was conducted of students at another AACSB-accredited College of Business to determine what students knew about business etiquette for American style dining (versus the Continental style, used primarily in Europe). Only 50% of the respondents rated their knowledge of American dining etiquette as average, and almost 30% rated their knowledge as poor. Fewer than four percent rated their knowledge as excellent, while 19% rated it as good. (McDaniel, et al., 2014.) While recognizing their own lack of knowledge on this topic, over 90% of these same students rated knowledge of business dining as important or very important for business people.

Table Introductions, Seating, and Ordering

If introductions are needed, Mah (2004) guides that rank rules over gender. An easy way for students to remember is to always say the name of the “most important” person first. In the introduction a sentence about the person is also considered appropriate. If a customer is being introduced to colleagues, the customer’s name should come first.

It is customary to shake hands with everyone present at the table. It is also customary to stand when being introduced. It is important to pay attention to names if those in attendance are not already acquaintances or colleagues. Mah further explains that it is customary that the guests remain standing until the host sits. If you are attending a business luncheon, the host should indicate where you should sit.

When it comes time to order, it is always acceptable to ask questions about the menu if food allergy concerns are present. However, asking numerous questions about all of the items on the menu may leave the impression that this person is either indecisive or very finicky. One should never order the most expensive item on the menu. Mah (2004) recommends asking your host for recommendations from the menu in order to know an appropriate price range for the meal. Bass (2010) cautions readers to avoid ordering meals that can be messy to eat. She recommends ordering something the diner likes that can be eaten neatly.

Wilbanks (2012) provides tips for reserving seats at a large dinner event. She suggests placing a business card on the napkin to reserve a place or if you do not have a business card available, to place the napkin in the chair. She recommends to do this also for your guest if you have a guest attending the dinner with you. Never tilt the chair to the table.

Learning the Lay of the Land

McDaniel, Bevill, McNeely, and Watson (2014) conducted a study of business students to assess their knowledge of proper dining etiquette. Results indicated that many students are not knowledgeable about the placement of dining utensils, food, and drink. They state, "Professionals need to know where their bread and butter plate and glassware are located; otherwise, they could mistakenly eat the bread or drink the wine belonging to their boss or client" (p. 26).

When sitting down at the table, it can sometimes be confusing as to which items belong to which place setting. Jennings (2016) proposed a simple way to help students remember which side the various meal items belong in a presentation entitled "Hey You're Eating my Salad." to a group of National Business Education Conference attendees. She calls it "The Rule of 4 and 5." The items that are on the left side of the plate have four letters (as does the word left). The items on the right side of the plate have five letters (as does the word right). Looking at LEFT (4 letters) – you have the fork and food (both having four letters). This means you will have the fork on the left of the plate and any food items that are to the left of plate would be yours (i.e. bread, salad, dessert). Looking at the RIGHT side of the plate you have the spoon, knife and drink. This includes all beverages: water glass, iced tea glass, wine glass, and coffee cup. Remembering "The Rule of 4 and 5" should make proper personal item identification easy.

The Main Event

At a business meal the main emphasis should be on business, not the meal. Mah (2004) states, "eating is secondary to the business you are conducting" (p.13). Do not rush through the meal. Conversation at the table, especially at a business meeting, will probably be led by the host. Very often conversation begins with informal "small" talk. Mah (2004) describes this as a way to connect before getting down to business. During this conversation it is advisable to avoid subjects such as politics and religion. Maintain good eye contact with those whom you converse. You should not have your cell phone out during the meal. Your attention should be on the conversation with the other attendees of the meal (Wilbanks, 2012).

Depending on the size of the group, all meals may not arrive at the same time. It is customary to wait until all members of the group are served before eating. Items at the table that need to be shared such as bread, butter, or salad dressing should be passed to the right starting with the person closest to the item. Salt and pepper should always be passed together.

It should go without saying that one should not put their elbows (or purse) on the table. Likewise, all chewing should be done with the mouth closed. These are both things one assumes all parents teach their children.

If the necessity arises to leave the table before the meal is over, quietly excuse yourself. It is not necessary to announce where you are going or why. You should place your napkin in the chair and push the chair under the table. When you are finished eating, you can signal this to the server by placing your knife and fork crossing in the middle of your plate (Wilbanks, 2012).

<u>Paying for Meal, Tipping, and Thanking the Host</u>

It is customary for the person who makes the invitation for the meal to be the one to pay for the meal. If you are sharing a bill at a business luncheon, split the bill evenly, even if you had less to eat than others in the group (Mah, 2004). Tipping is required, regardless of the service. The tip should be calculated as a percentage of the pre-tax meal amount. Typically, 15 percent for satisfactory service and 20 percent for excellent service is given. If the service is particularly bad, a tip of 10 percent can be given.

Once the meal is over, a hand-shake is a customary business parting. If more than one person was part of a group that treated the lunch, thank each person in the group. A well-written thank you note after a meal is always good business practice. This should be done within two days following the business lunch.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Robles (2012) stresses that "Soft skills and hard skills should be integrated to create a well-rounded business graduate" (p. 463). Soft skills, and business dining etiquette in particular, have not always been considered the responsibility of the business college. In the student survey by Bayless, Clipson, and Muir (2013), students were asked their opinions about the best way to include business dining etiquette in the curriculum. More than half of the respondents indicated a preference for a seminar or workshop which actually involved eating a business meal and using the etiquette. The second highest response (34.5%) was to involve the university's career services department in dining etiquette training. Bayless et al. recommended that this training be part of a workshop/seminar as part of a capstone course, part of a course focused on interviews/resumes, or in a senior transition course. Students suggested that a career service office and student organizations could also play a role in developing business dining skills and knowledge among students. (Bayless, Clipson, & Muir, 2013.)

One of the most important things business educators can do is to help students realize the importance of soft skills and how their execution of these skills can affect their ultimate success in the workforce. Bayless, Clipson, & Muir (2013) suggest one way to help students is to provide exposure at the high school and community college levels. Future Business Leaders of American (FBLA) and Business Professionals of America (BPA) chapters in high school would be a great place to implement training for students in professional business dining. This would provide a solid foundation for students to polish these skills at the university before heading to the workforce. At the university level a concentrated effort should be made to emphasize soft skills for the workplace. It is these soft skills that contribute to a polished professional image. And, while a professional image does not actually appear in students' grade point averages or directly on their resumes that are needed to get the interview for a position, it may go a long way toward securing the position and the advancement of careers.

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The Use of Recorded Lecture Videos: Investigating Learning Preferences and Universal Design for Learning Principles

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Educators often employ a diverse set of instructional techniques in order to meet the needs of their diverse student body. Aligned with the universal design for learning principle of offering students multiple means of accessing course content, this study investigated the use of recorded lecture screencasts and tested for differences based on the students' VARK learning preference(s). The results indicated statistically significant differences in the video viewing habits based on their learning preference. As a result, practical implications for educators are provided.

Introduction

The idea that learning can be enhanced by accommodating learning differences among students is not a new idea. According to McCabe (2014), there has been a substantial amount of research on learning styles in the past thirty years, including a focus on how relationships between pedagogy and the student's learning style impact student success. Accordingly, this is an important topic for educational research (McCabe, 2014). Miller (2001) found that when instruction is modified to fit the learning styles of the students, there was an improvement in their motivation and performance. Aligned with this idea, Tanner and Allen (2004) posited that instructors have a responsibility to address the variety of learning styles among their students and to develop lessons that incorporate a variety of learning approaches. According to previous research (Dunn et al., 2009; Favre, 2007a, 2007b; Fine, 2003; Shea Doolan, 2004), learning styles have improved instruction by encouraging teachers to eliminate "the one-size-fits-all approach and acknowledge the need to modify their classrooms, instructional practices, and assessments" (Dunn et al., 2009, p. 138).

Literature Review

Learning Styles and Preferences

Felder and Henriques (1995) defined an individual's learning style as "the ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information" (p. 21). According to Sadler-Smith (1996), there are differences between learning styles and learning preferences. An individual's learning preference is the manner in which they prefer to learn or the favoring of a particular teaching mode over another. Learning styles, on the other hand, are the habitual way the individual acquires knowledge and skills.

One way to assess an individual's learning preference is through the administration of the VARK questionnaire. VARK is an acronym for visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic. According to Fleming (2001, p. 1), "VARK is in the category of instructional preference because it deals with perceptual modes. It is focused on the different ways that we take in and give out information." The VARK questionnaire version 7.1 is freely available online (http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/) and presents participants with sixteen statements. Each statement describes a situation and the respondent selects one to four of the four answer choices provided that aligns with his or her preference. Once the questions have been answered, the participant receives a score that corresponds with a VARK learning preference. Individuals can have one dominant learning preference, or they may be multimodal, which indicates preference for multiple modes ("The VARK Questionnaire," n.d.).

Fleming (2001) identified various learning activities appropriate for different VARK learning preferences. For example, visual learners prefer diagrams, charts, and written texts. Aural learners desire discussions, video and audio, and seminars. Books, note taking, and handouts are preferred among read/write learners. Finally, demonstrations, real-life examples, and role-playing are desired for kinesthetic learners (Fleming, 2001).

Universal Design for Learning

Although Universal Design was originally an architectural concept ("UDI," n.d.), the related accessibility principles have since been additionally applied to the learning environment. Universal design for learning (UDL) was defined by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 as "… a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that: (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient." Universal design is focused on reaching all learners and reducing barriers without compromising the rigor of the course (Watt et al., 2014). Since lecture capture technologies allow students to have an increased level of control over their learning and provides additional flexibility to students, Brogan (2009) found that they fit into the principles of universal design. Similarly, Watt et al. (2014) found lecture capturing to be aligned with universal design principles as well.

According to previous research studies, most students receive benefits when the instructor provides recordings, either audio or video, for the students to use outside the class (Brogan, 2009; Williams, 2006). Such recordings are perceived to be learner-centered because the students can review them when it is convenient for their schedule and at their own desired pace (Gorissen, van Bruggen, & Jochems, 2012; Traphagan, Kucsera, & Kishi, 2010). Students have noted that the benefits include flexibility and convenience, and that the recordings impact their learning (Fernandez, Simo, & Sallan, 2009; Vajoczki, Watt, & Marquis, 2008; Vajoczki, Watt, Marquis, & Holshausen, 2010; Vajoczki, Watt, Marquis, Liao, & Vine, 2011).

Face-to-face classes

When considering the inverted (or flipped) classroom, Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) commented that a traditional lecture class was incompatible with the learning preferences of some students. As such, the authors argued that the inverted class methodology, where class time is spent on higher levels of learning (Brame, 2013), could be used to address this issue. In the face-to-face sections targeted in this study, students had the following resources available as means through which to access course content: required course textbook, recorded lecture screencasts created by the instructor, face-to-face meetings, supplemental material posted in the learning management system, and supplemental material available online from the textbook publisher.

Online class

When discussing online classes, at times students have noted that they can be boring and involve too much reading. As such, by providing lecture videos, the students are offered a diversity of learning opportunities (Belcheir & Cucek, 2001; Choi & Johnson, 2005). As it relates to this study, by providing students multiple means of accessing content, students can choose the option that best suits their individual learning preference.

In the online course targeted in this study, students had the following resources available as means through which to access course content: required course textbook, audio files available from course textbook publisher, recorded lecture screencasts created by the instructor, supplemental material posted in the learning management system, and supplemental material available online from the textbook publisher.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there are differences in the recorded lecture video viewing habits of students based on their identified VARK learning preference. The following research question guided this study:

RQ1) Is there a statistically significant difference in the video viewing habits of students based on their learning preference?

Methodology

For implementation in the spring 2016 semester, the instructor of an undergraduate business communication course recorded lecture screencasts that displayed a PowerPoint while the instructor lectured over the topics. Each video was then uploaded to the learning management system as an additional means through which the students could access the content, which is aligned with UDL principles. This strategy was used for two face-to-face sections of the course and one online section. At the beginning of the course, a VARK questionnaire (n.d.) was administered to identify the learning preferences of the students enrolled in the course. The results of the questionnaire are used as part of this Institutional Review Board approved study for those consenting to participate.

This study has notable limitations. Students completed the VARK questionnaire online and self-reported their responses. As such, there is a possibility that they reported incorrect information or did not fully consider their preferences while completing the VARK questionnaire. In addition, the researcher could only track whether the videos were accessed and the length of time played, not whether the student actually watched them. Therefore, it is possible that students let the video play while not sitting at their computer or while doing other things, thereby limiting the usefulness of the resource to them personally. In an effort to mitigate some of the risk of this, the researcher only considered the video as accessed if the student was on the page for the length of the video. If the learning management system displayed that the student only accessed the resource for a few seconds or a few minutes, the researcher did not count those webpage views as accessing the videos for the purposes of this research study.

Results

Of the 59 people who participated in this study, 81% (48) had a single dominant preferred mode of information presentation, while 19% (11) preferred multiple modes. The VARK results are shown in Figure 1 for those with a single dominant mode. Nearly half of the participants (48%) were identified as visual learners (V).

Figure 1
Single Mode Results

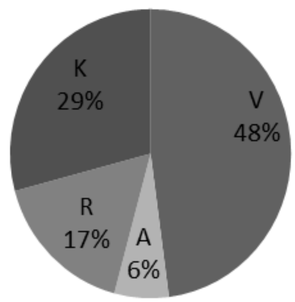

Figure 2
Multimodal Results

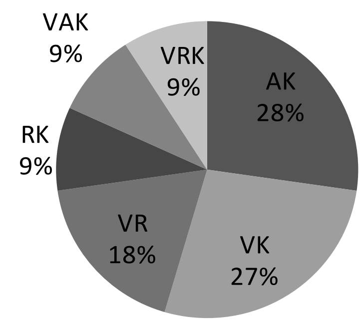

Figure 2 displays the results of those with a multimodal preference. Of those who identified a multimodal preference, the majority had two dominant learning preferences; however, 18% of the participants who were multimodal scored highly in three different modes.

The learning management system's course data was used to track whether a student accessed the recorded lecture screencast available in each module of the class. The total number of videos accessed was used in this study. To test for differences between the various VARK learning preferences and the number of videos accessed, SPSS® was used to perform a one-way ANOVA. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between the four learning preferences ($F(3,68) = 3.860$, $p = .013$).

<u>Implications for Education</u>

This study's finding that there are statistically significant differences in the video viewing habits of students based on their identified VARK learning preference is impactful for educators. Given today's diverse student body, instructors often seek ways to reach students where they are and to engage them in the course in innovative ways. Aligned with previous scholars' findings that lectures are incompatible with all learning preferences (Lage et al., 2000), this study's findings further emphasize the need for variety in instructional techniques utilized.

When given the option to watch the videos, not all students opted to access the course content in that way. Those who did, however, reported numerous benefits. While not all students found the videos beneficial to them personally, many of them noted that they could see how the videos might be helpful to others. Once again, the diversity of the student body is emphasized. Recording lecture videos can be one of many methods utilized to deliver course content in a manner that meets the needs of a diverse set of learning preferences present within any classroom.

Conclusion

The idea of presenting material utilizing various methods is not a new concept in education. Recognizing the unique needs of students, each of whom have a preferred way of learning new material, educators should consider offering recorded lecture videos as a resource for students to access if they wish. Doing so is aligned with the UDL principle of multiple means of accessing course content and can help set students up for success in the classroom.

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Including Discussions of Sustainability and Ethics in Introduction to Business Classes

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The AACSB requires that business educators cover business ethics and sustainability. This article explores one method of incorporating both topics into the typical introductory business class. The approach suggested can easily fit into classes in various business disciplines. The article also presents a brief history of the evolution of business ethics and the topic of sustainability, and provides methods for linking the concepts in an efficient manner.

Introduction

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) the major accrediting body of our nation's colleges and schools of business specifically requires that business educators cover the "… ethical environment in which businesses operate" (Bird & Hiller, 2016, n.p.). In response, those who teach introductory business classes attempt to include this coverage in many types of classes spread throughout the major disciplines within the study of business including, business law, accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing. Increasingly, business schools have even required a specific class in business ethics as a core course for all business majors. Many of us who teach in these areas acknowledge that a discussion of ethics is crucial to a well-rounded business education. This need is highlighted when examined in the context of the serious ethical failures that permeate our business culture. We need only examine recent headlines and lead stories from the nation's major media outlets to take note of these failures, which include such well-known names as HP, Apple, Google, Microsoft and Sony (McLaughlin, 2014).

If a business educator teaching an introductory business class seeks a method of emphasizing and incorporating a discussion of ethics into these classes, this article examines one approach toward achieving this goal. Specifically, this article addresses incorporating a discussion of sustainability into the introductory business class. Coverage of sustainability is also required under AACSB guidelines (Bird & Hiller, 2016). This topic easily blends into any introductory business class and links well with a discussion of business ethics. Combining these topics allows for efficient use of classroom time and meets accreditation standards.

Background

As stated above, one need look no farther than the headlines and lead news stories of the past two decades to find examples of ethical crises in our nation's business culture. In response to these failures, ethics and ethical decision-making have emerged as common topics in many university curricula. As colleges and schools of business react to these ethical lapses, a common approach to including ethics into the business curriculum emerged. This more traditional approach emphasized capitalist values and focused on profit maximization (Doh & Tashman, 2014). Some have criticized this approach as it can condition students to overlook ethical issues and fail to promote true ethical awareness. Under this approach, ethical instruction becomes more about tolerance for ethical concerns, not an aspiration to achieve ethical ends; largely students subjected to this approach learn to avoid trouble (Doh & Tashman, 2014).

In an attempt to address these weaknesses in the traditional approach, and in order to become more proactive when addressing the topic of ethics in business, the curricula evolved toward a concept known as Corporate Social Responsibility (Wright & Bennett, 2011). This more global approach reflects a balanced teaching model that integrates economic, social and human elements into classroom discussion of ethics (Doh & Tashman, 2014).

One key component of any discussion of CSR is the topic of sustainability. In July 2008, the AACSB International held its first Sustainability Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. Representatives from over 200 business schools attended this inaugural meeting including representatives from 15 countries outside of the United States. The purpose of the conference was to share ideas on the application of sustainability and what business schools were doing to educate students on this important topic. This conference continued with the most recent gathering taking place in Atlanta, Georgia in June of 2014. Conference participants were presented with materials making it clear that corporate social responsibility includes sustainable business practices and that these practices themselves can encourage ethical business behavior (www.aacsb.edu).

The evidence is in: the AACSB, our institutions of higher learning, national and international leaders and our business communities all demand coverage of ethics and sustainability in our business classrooms. The introductory business class represents the perfect opportunity for exposing students to these important topics. As addressed above, CSR represents a newer model of teaching ethics and includes the topic of sustainability. Discussions can begin at this point in a business student's education and continue throughout their undergraduate career. This article focuses on how instructors who are interested in including ethics and sustainability into their business course can go about integrating the topic into their classes. The concept of sustainability can seem quite overwhelming and expansive, so where does one begin? The following represents a Three-step approach that easily integrates into almost any introductory business class. This approach introduces students to the topic ethics through coverage of CSR and sustainability.

Discussion

Step one: First present a discussion of ethics generally. Most textbooks at the introductory level include a section on business ethics. The ethics chapters in these books tend to provide ample examples of "unethical" business conduct. Some books include coverage of ethical scandals such as Enron, Charles Ponzi and Bernard Madoff. A review of the coverage in these texts notes that the emphasis is on avoiding trouble, not on seeking higher level "ethical awareness" in a global sense (Doh & Tashman, 2014). As one textbook describes, "Business ethics focuses on what is right and wrong behavior in the business world" (Clarkson, Miller & Cross, 2015, p. 95).

Ethics is much more than just "right or wrong" behavior in a business context. Ethics and ethical behavior are global and are entwined in our social, economic and environmental conditions. For this reason it is imperative to expand the discussion of ethics to include Corporate Social Responsibility (Wright & Bennett, 2011).

Step two: Next this process involves adding coverage of the role of Corporate Social Responsibility as an approach to ethical decision-making. Corporate Social Responsibility touches every area of business practice, from accounting, to marketing and from marketing to human resources. CSR is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. CSR and a business' ethical role in society are linked to a corporation's role in minimizing the destruction to and maximizing the preservation of, resources for future generations (Fallon Taylor, 2015). Ideally, CSR functions as a method of self-regulation, whereby businesses monitor and ensure adherence to legal and ethical standards along with international norms. Essentially, CSR is the deliberate inclusion of public interest into corporate decision-making (Wright & Bennett, 2011).

An important step in implementation of the CSR approach includes the Triple Bottom Line also known as 3BL or TBL. This management approach has decision makers considering not only profit maximization, but also the effect of business decisions on the planet and the people of the world. The phrase "triple bottom line" was first coined by John Elkington in 1994 and later explained in his 1998 book, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*. In his book, Elkington (1998) explains that 3BL reporting expands traditional reporting framework to take into account not only financial performance (profit) but also performance in the areas of the environment (planet) and the social environment (people). According to Elkington (1998), 3BL is a way to integrate profit maximizing along with the goals of sustainability. Elkington (1998) explains that the Planet element of 3BL reporting refers to sustainable environmental practices and that a TBL endeavor reduces its ecological footprint by, among other things, carefully managing its consumption of energy and non-renewables and reducing manufacturing waste as well as rendering waste less toxic before disposing of it in a safe and legal manner.

An interesting "real world" example involving the implementation of a TBL system is a private firm located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cascade Engineering (Cascade). Cascade has developed a TBL scorecard that contains the following elements:

Economic (Profits)
- Amount of taxes paid

Social (People)
- Average hours of training/employee
- From welfare to career retention
- Charitable contributions

Environmental/Safety (Planet)
- Safety incident rate
- Lost/restricted workday rate
- Sales dollars per kilowatt hours
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Use of post-consumer and industrial recycled material
- Water consumption
- Amount of waste to landfill. (Slaper & Hall, 2011, p. 6).

It is within the discussion of the planet element of the TBL approach to ethical CSR that the topic of sustainability fits best.

<u>Step three:</u> The final step in the process of including discussions of sustainability into introductory business topics calls for linking sustainability to ethics and corporate social responsibility. Specifically, as stated above, the planet aspect of 3BL reporting includes sustainability and sustainable business practices. A good place to start the third step is by defining the term "sustainability" itself. For several decades the idea of human sustainability has become increasingly associated with the integration of the economic, social and environmental spheres of human existence (Marz, 2008, p. 77). The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines sustainability as follows: " … development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Barlund, 2007, n.p.). The commitment of the international community to sustainability continues today as evidenced by the recent signing of the historic Paris climate accord. On

Earth Day, 2016, representatives from 175 nations signed this agreement thereby demonstrating their commitment to providing a sustainable future for "… all generations to come" (Rice, 2016, n.p.).

Indeed, many businesses and organizations today have adopted 3BL reporting. For example, General Electric issues the *GE Citizenship Report*. This report stresses that GE is committed to the concept of sustainability and addressing the sustainability challenges the world faces. A recent copy of the GE report can be found at: http://www.gesustainability.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/ 05/GE_2012_ Sustainable_Growth.pdf. GE and other companies including Patagonia and Nike use 3BL reporting to gauge themselves as responsible corporate citizens under the CSR approach to ethical decision-making. Embracing sustainability reflects a business' commitment to acting ethically (Pantsios, 2015).

Conclusion

American businesses increasingly equate ethical behavior with the application of CSR. CSR, includes emphasis on 3BL and 3BL reporting. 3BL reporting includes attention to the planet and this involves adopting sustainable business practices. By covering ethical business decision-making in the context of engaging in sustainable business practices, the modern business instructor demonstrates to her students that ethics is not just about right and wrong in light of profit maximization and avoiding trouble. Embracing sustainability demonstrates the integration of ethical behavior into every aspect of the business function. The study of sustainability expands a student's understanding of business as integral to and entwined in our human condition.

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Helping Your Students Win at Career Fairs

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Although secondary and post-secondary Communication, Business Communication, English, and Technical Writing faculty often introduce classroom activities designed to help students prepare for interacting with corporate recruiters at career fairs, instructors can improve the odds of student success by engaging in additional actions immediately before, during, and after these events. The author's experience over a decade of semi-annual fair engagement suggests that beyond simply assisting students with resume or elevator-pitch development, instructors who offer students rapid feedback, advice, on-the-spot encouragement, and practical fair-management strategies directly promote student success, particularly when they deploy on-the-spot recommendations to help students secure subsequent interviews.

Introduction

College students burden themselves with (on average) approximately $35,000 in debt while earning a four-year degree (Sparshott, 2015, para. 3). Since roughly 31% of two- and four-year university spending remains allocated to instructional salaries (Flaherty, 2015, para. 20), the extraordinary—and typically debt-funded—student investment in tuition merits (in the author's view) a more direct faculty engagement in activities that position students to pay down this debt after graduation. For decades, college students have relied on college-recruitment fairs to establish the contacts that lead to gainful employment; thus, career fairs represent a logical venue for instructorial engagement. However, the author's decade-long experience attending career fairs at multiple post-secondary institutions suggests that faculty members rarely attend these events. Perhaps this explains why previous academic studies of career fairs appear neither to have documented the positive impact that faculty can have in promoting student success at such fairs, nor have they outlined a step-by-step process for faculty and students to follow before, during, and after these events.

This is not to suggest that faculty members do little to promote pre-professionalization in the classroom; indeed, far from it. Faculty members regularly support pre-professional exercises and programs through resume critiques, career workshops, and even business etiquette dinners. Within disciplines such as Business Communication (and in business programs more broadly), pre-professional activities commonly encompass elevator pitches, mock interviews, and full-scale internship programs overseen by faculty members. Certainly, anecdotal evidence indicates that instructors take a great deal of pride in former students as the latter successfully navigate the job market.

In addition, any number of universities offer professionalization assistance through student-success programs that incorporate a broad variety of pre-professional activities; indeed, one such program featured 20+ workshops in a single semester covering topics as varied as interview strategies; tips on job searching and networking; a variety of "Careers in…" and "Meet the Professor…" panels; a women-in-business seminar; breakfast meetings with professional accountants, bankers, and lawyers; and hands-on practice under the guidance of professional toastmasters. The following semester's equally varied fare included a "business leaders' symposium, library skills workshops, business etiquette, job fair preparation, job shadowing day, crisis management [workshops]," and visits to the New York Stock Exchange and Federal Reserve (as reported in Ekmekjian, 2011, p. 73; similar activities were identified in Peto & Geddert, 2015).

Of course, a host of non-academic pre-professional blogs and websites, many of them sponsored or produced by career-development firms, also offer advice regarding how candidates can excel during a job search. For instance, Hansen (2015) and Smith (2014) provide efficient, checklist-based descriptions of how candidates may improve their odds of career fair success. Yet few academic studies have analyzed the career-fair phenomenon, and of these few even tangentially comment upon the potentially efficacious role played by faculty members at career fairs. Perhaps that's because (as personal experience has indicated to the author) few faculty members attend such fairs—not even business college faculty members, who likely share common workplace experiences with fair recruiters.

Thus begging the question: if faculty members directly and intentionally enable students to develop marketable skills in the classroom, why don't they also expend their personal and professional capital to assist students in landing job interviews proffered in the wake of career fairs? In considering whether or not such interventions fit within academic environments, faculty could reasonably view career-fair assistance as a logical extension of the variety of student-success initiatives implemented in response to higher-education reforms that seek to establish overt partnerships between faculty and students. The closer integration achieved between students and faculty via successful learning communities, service learning programs, and first-year seminars—each of which positions faculty members in "essential" leadership roles (Guentzel, 2009, p. 285)—has prompted some reform advocates to suggest that these out-of-classroom activities be re-designated a faculty priority (p. 278).

Though many of these programs require significant faculty resources, a benefit of direct faculty interventions at career fairs remains the relatively short time commitment involved—typically something like four to five hours once or twice an academic year. Moreover, even if most recent student success efforts remain non-compensated efforts for faculty (relative to, say, promotion or tenure, as noted in Reavy, 2003, p. 179), career-fair initiatives enable faculty members to leverage the foundations previously put into place by campus Career Service offices. In case studies of faculty engagement within the Career Services space, Amanda Jeppesen (2014) has noted that due to budgetary constraints a university's augmenting of Career Services can often be "met by going deeper with the services currently offered, rather than adding new programs, resources, or services" (p. 2). In Jeppesen's view, faculty members remain uniquely suited for establishing "relationships between recruiters and career service offices" precisely because recruiters—many of whom have demonstrated an interest in developing closer relations with faculty members at recruiting events (p. 2)—hope to identify the strongest job candidates by leveraging the faculty's prior contact with student recruits. While Career Services "can bridge the gap between faculty and employers" by sponsoring career networking events like fairs (p. 4), campuses that deploy faculty to augment recruitment events can avoid over-burdening the Career Service officers who organize and manage those events (p. 5). Based upon the author's experience, university alums who return to campus as corporate recruiters thoroughly enjoy the frisson of interacting as peers with the very same faculty members they once looked to as mentors.

In sum, career-fair participation represents a final step in pre-professional instruction that aligns with experiential or service learning programs designed to engage students more directly with the community beyond the classroom. Such engagement can, in return, positively impact faculty members by validating whether or not the skills developed in the classroom are translating successfully to corporate consumers in the marketplace. However, as is true of service learning more generally, not every faculty member should be required to participate in career fairs—as an instructor's personal motivation to engage in non-classroom pedagogy (regardless of an institution's recognition of the value of service learning) remain factors to be considered (per Reavy, 2003, pp. 6-8). Yet for those faculty members who feel uncertain as to whether or not they, as career academics, can effectively assist students at as commercial an event as a career fair, clearly the experience of enduing pressurized interview processes while securing their teaching posts has emotionally equipped them to empathize with young job seekers. However, since willing faculty members perhaps lack a repeatable process for helping their students win at career fairs, the following program (developed by the author through trial and error over at least two dozen fair events) is hereby submitted for their consideration, as it has dependably resulted in positive student outcomes.

Before the fair

Career-fair success accrues to students who aggressively prepare for the event; therefore, instructors should highlight the importance of fair preparation and offer useful event-participation strategies in the classroom, perhaps in partnership with representatives from Career Services. Resume-preparation assignments should be preceded by student self-assessments of the skills developed during their professional, pre-professional, and co-curricular experiences. In simultaneously exhibiting a core research tool, faculty members may demonstrate (via databases like Business Source Complete and Mergent Online) precisely how students can secure SWOT analyses, MarketLine reports, and other documents that summarize key information concerning the companies that students hope to target at the fair. In addition, workshops focused on the development of a strong elevator pitch serve to hone oral communication skills needed at the fair.

Although such preparatory activities tend to be included in online job-search websites and in employment journals like *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* (Jobs fairs, 2000, p. 19), a critically useful activity typically ignored by students is the development of an event participation strategy. In this step, students carefully (a) review which recruiting firms are attending the fair, (b) identify where their booths will be located, and (c) establish a tentative plan to "work the room" for maximum effectiveness. Of course, if maps of a fair's attendee booths are unavailable beforehand, then this planning step may need to wait until the day of the fair. But in either case, students with or without pre-marked maps should be reminded to arrive at the event early in order to identify and target a booth's likely decision makers—typically more experienced staffers who hover in the background carrying clipboards. Experience has shown that since decision makers tend to arrive and leave early, students should adjust their schedules accordingly. Furthermore, the lines at recruiting booths tend to be shorter during the opening hour or two of a fair, thus enabling students to engage in longer conversations with recruiters (to the benefit of both parties).

Faculty members should advise students that those who establish an effective participation strategy map out where a student's favored (or "big fish") targets are located and actively monitor these sites during the event. If big-fish lines remain small, students can practice their elevator pitches and patter with "smaller fish"—companies relative to which the student bears no preexisting career interest. Engaging smaller fish first settles a student's nerves, enables a student to perfect his or her opening lines, and typically results in more confident responses to a recruiter's follow-up questions. While lines remain relatively short, clever students can loiter in the lines of the booths adjacent to their big fish. Through eavesdropping, students can predict which questions the big fish might ask of them and can understand precisely what positions might be on offer, thereby facilitating a smoother conversation. Moreover, job seekers should be reminded that those who visit booths during less crowded periods may find themselves able to "work" the line in order to speak directly with the booth's likely decision maker <u>before</u> that individual's energy level and attention span wanes after several consecutive hours of standing and talking with other candidates.

Finally, instructors should encourage all of their students to attend career fairs even if the latter are not actively seeking a new position. Most students require significant practice before they can develop the confidence and internal fortitude required to navigate career fairs successfully. Fairs, in short, amount to an awkward form of corporate fraternity/sorority "rush," and students who have been exposed previously to the event's awkward rhythms generally become less flustered when the pressure to secure post-graduation employment actually arrives. Indeed, students who network with firms attending fairs early in their academic careers can identify recruiters who return every semester, thereby securing contact names useful as ice-breakers during subsequent fair visits.

During the fair

Despite all of the useful information, practice exercises, strategies, and tips that faculty can offer students prior to a fair, however, perhaps the most practical and impactful contributions faculty can offer to help students stand out as exceptional potential hires occur during a fair itself. Faculty members, too, should arrive early, albeit to introduce themselves to as many booth recruiters as possible in order to identify which firms are looking for particular qualifications to fill their full-time, part-time, and/or internship -positions. Rapid notes taken during these scouting sessions may be shared with students, particularly those who show up early. Such preliminary fair scouting additionally uncovers which firms are recruiting actively, as opposed to those merely "waving the corporate flag" to raise brand awareness without actively sourcing new staffers. Business cards collected during these introductions can be passed onto students for use as exceptional ice-breakers, since any student capable of demonstrating proof to a recruiter that "my professor specifically suggested that I speak with you" thereby carries with him or her an implicit faculty recommendation.

Once the fair begins in earnest, faculty members should relocate to the lobby in order to remain in plain sight of arriving students. In the lobby, instructors can invite students to practice their elevator pitches while offering brief corrective advice (a simple step that nevertheless instills confidence at a critical juncture in a student's career search). Instructors should remind students to practice their pitches on "smaller fish" first, in part because these conversations often result in unexpected and useful network contacts. Once students have fished their smaller ponds, they should be prompted to take a break to rest and to steel themselves for tackling their big fish. "And remember to smile," instructors should tell them, because recruiters are explicitly looking for folks with whom they might actually enjoy working; moreover, recruiters seek candidates at fairs during which, thanks to increasingly long booth lines, candidates tend to frown, scowl, and/or look bored while standing in line. As they encourage students to remain upbeat throughout, canny faculty members can soothe the nerves of momentarily discomfited or even despondent candidates by making the awkward seem more familiar. "Hey, just remember: It's corporate fraternity rush in there, and your job is to make the recruiter feel engaged. The more you smile, listen carefully, and get him or her talking, the better. That means you're winning." For based on the author's experience, those students will indeed be winning, especially if they follow up an active conversation with an engaged recruiter with an on-the-spot faculty recommendation.

The difference maker

During a quick debriefing held as a student nears the end of his or her planned booth visits, faculty members should ask those students who have previously earned the right to receive a personal recommendation to identify the booth where the student felt the discussions seemed particularly promising. If such a prospect exists, faculty members can offer the student an "on-the-spot" personal recommendation. If the offer is accepted, the student will walk the instructor over to the relevant booth and point out the recruiter with whom the student spoke (hopefully referencing the individual's name from a business card collected during the student's visit). Once the booth's line thins out, the instructor can approach the recruiter and, during a brief chat, provide a personal recommendation backed with a copy of the instructor's business card containing the student's name on the back of the card. In thanking at the same time each booth's members for providing important career-advancement opportunities on campus, faculty members thereby flatter the ego of most recruiters, and if done properly, that positive feeling will be associated with the student whose name is on the instructor's card. The author's personal experience suggests that recruiters highly value these quick recommendations because they help recruiters mitigate the potential reputational risk inherent in recommending campus candidates for subsequent interviews to their peers. And very commonly, these on-the-spot recommendations result in a student's receiving a coveted gold star or an asterisk on a booth's clipboard denoting those job seekers targeted for a subsequent on-site interview.

Regardless of whether or not a student receives an on-the-spot recommendation, however, faculty should encourage all students to return one last time to the booths that they feel optimistic about. In these return visits, students should repeat their names and thank the recruiters for having shared important information concerning career opportunities with them. Not only does this small gesture indicate that each student possesses an elevated sense of courtesy (always a desirable characteristic in potential co-workers), but in a more practical sense it represents yet another opportunity for a recruiter to "see" and put a candidate's name and face together. In fact, for students who've received an on-the-spot recommendation this "thank-you" visit represents a third interaction between the recruiter and the student (or the student's proxy). At the same time, less focused and prepared fair attendees have limited their engagement to a single interaction.

After the fair

As students depart, instructors ought to remind them to jot down notes from their interactions before reiterating the criticality of sending a "thank you" email within 24 hours to each recruiter via the contact information on the business cards collected by the students. While each thank you message demonstrates proper business etiquette, it potentially represents a fourth interaction within a 24-hour period through which a recruiter will be exposed to a candidate's name or face. Students who engage in only a single interaction with a given recruiter may risk seeming less highly motivated or pro-active than those who follow up. Note that these emails are especially effective if they allude to something specific said by the recruiter during the face-to-face interaction with the student—hence the importance of rapid note-taking at the event's close.

For instructors, the first class session after the fair has concluded offers an opportunity to engage in a relatively brief Q&A session prompting fair participants to describe their fair experience to their fellows. Since students often share specific strategies or actions that they felt succeeded (or not), both participants and non-participants alike have a chance to analyze the process and to chart potential corrective actions prior to subsequent fair (or other interview) experiences. Moreover, allowing students who didn't attended the fair to learn from their peers often serves to demystify a potentially off-putting event.

But does this process actually work?

Consider the recent case of a good, hard-working, yet not academically exceptional student who carefully followed a strategic career-fair plan developed in a Business Communication class during the summer of 2015. After working repeatedly with both his instructor and Career Services to polish his *curriculum vitae*, the student pursued all of the key steps noted above on the day of the fair: Arriving early, he scouted the booths, identified probable decision makers, and eavesdropped on his big-fish. He practiced his pitch at small-fish booths, took a break to regroup, practiced his pitch again in the lobby, and then tackled a total of nine big fish. He asked for—and was granted—an instructor's on-the-spot recommendation, which the student followed up by returning to offer personal thanks to the recruiters he'd seen that day…all before sending out follow-up emails (proofread by a third party to ensure no errors) within 24 hours. In the end, the student secured six big-fish interviews, and from these he eventually secured four full-time job offers. <u>All</u> from same fair. After having taken a position with the firm that received his instructor's spot recommendation, the student returned to campus a year later—this time as his firm's corporate recruiter at the fair. Thus, an individual student's success resulted in subsequent opportunities for the next generation of fair attendees. Experiences like this suggest that universities may very well build up their brand value within the business community in this manner: one candidate, and one fair, at a time.

For the author, career-fair success (and failure) represents perhaps the most unambiguous yardstick measuring the effectiveness of an academic program. Nevertheless, career fairs necessitate extensive preparation for both students and faculty members, even as they represent the precise moment when the communication skills instructors share within the classroom can result in tangible and positive outcomes for students. Since the acquisition of promising job-search contacts remains an essential step in enabling graduates to pay down the debts incurred in financing their education, a dedicated engagement in seeking positive fair outcomes may well represent an ethical imperative for faculty members. Finally, the author’s experience has suggested that exceptional fair outcomes don’t occur by accident, nor do they necessarily always feature our strongest academic achievers, who at times overconfidently fumble their way through a career fair. Successes happen, rather, as the result of diligent preparation and execution of proven job-search strategies and tactics before, after, and on the day of career fairs.

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Challenges and Strategies for Working with Online Teams

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One of the challenges for online instructors is designing strategies for effective team performance. Online teams often do not have the chance to meet in a face-to-face environment as traditional classes do. The authors conducted a study with two online classes to determine their experiences with online teams and to ask for suggestions and feedback to improve the online team experience. In addition, the authors developed a list of strategies that can be used when teaching with online teams.

Introduction

Today's employers are looking for employees with a strong set of soft skills. As one of the soft skills, business graduates are expected to be proficient in working in a team environment with a diverse makeup of members. To help prepare students, teamwork is a staple of course work during a student's academic career. In fact, the accrediting agency for colleges of business, The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2016), established Standard 9 in its accreditation process to encourage the ability to work with others through interpersonal relations and teamwork. Colleges of business are required to demonstrate how they are effectively meeting this standard related to teamwork during the accreditation process.

Instructors are often challenged to create team experiences that create an effective learning environment. Additionally, creating an effective teamwork experience in an online environment can be even more challenging. This paper will address student perceptions about teamwork in online courses and provide some practical strategies to improve the online team experience. Although some people will argue there is a distinction between the two terms, for this article the terms group and team are used interchangeably.

Issues in a Team Environment

Experienced instructors are challenged when using teamwork in their courses. Challenges arise in team formation, group size, communication, and evaluation. Chang and Hannafin (2015) caution that no learning approach is appropriate for all learning goals and each strategy should be adapted to the learner, content and desired outcome.

Groups can be formed through self-selection or be instructor-assigned, but Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) suggest that the instructor form the groups to insure diversity, provide discussion on effective group functioning, and provide clear tasks. However, Chang and Hannafin (2015) caution that simply the act of group formation is not sufficient to getting all students to become engaged with each other, and "students of varied background and knowledge often resist efforts to collaborate with peers on key learning outcomes" (p. 82).

The size of a group is another consideration. Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) believe smaller groups generate more discussion among group members. The smaller groups also encourage students to ask more questions of each other when they are unclear what is expected; these questions are those that students are less likely to ask of the instructor. Smaller groups may allow for more interaction, but they could also make dividing tasks more difficult. More complex, time-consuming projects are likely to need more group members. Groups that are too large can create confusion about task division; however, smaller teams do not always create a more effective team experience (Mao, Mason, Suri, & Watts, 2016). Therefore, the group size should fit the assignment. Chang and Hannafin (2015) warn that forming groups is more than just simply assigning students to a group. They state that “simply having membership in a group is not sufficient in accomplishing quality team outcomes and productivity; successful collaborative group work requires a high level, positive interdependence and strong common ground among group members” (Chang & Hannafin, 2015, p. 82).

Collaboration in the workplace is essential for career success, which means today’s students need to adapt to how others work through compromise and conflict management (Shwom & Snyder, 2016). Chang and Hannafin (2015) state that

> although instructors actively encourage student engagement and interaction within group tasks, not all groups work in an effective collaborative manner and construct shared knowledge. For various reasons, as they work together, groups create different levels of interdependence and engage in various types and levels of interaction (pp. 77-78).

Providing instruction on collaboration and division of labor can help groups work through issues. Communication is key to helping students learn course material. Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) believe that group work aids peer-to-peer learning, allows for discussion of differing opinions, and reveals misconceptions. The group process, they state, “requires interpersonal as well as cognitive skills – being able to give feedback in nonthreatening, supportive ways, maintaining focus on group goals, developing orderly task-oriented procedures, and developing and sustaining mutual tasks” (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014, p. 194). Free collaboration is essential in this learning process. Chang and Hannafin (2015) believe effective learning requires collaboration and appropriate feedback during the learning process and instructors should monitor this process to track students’ engagement and provide support when appropriate.

Group Work

Chang and Hannafin (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study of undergraduate students in a large science class. The class of mostly freshmen was divided into groups of 4-5 students. Chang and Hannafin found “that only higher performers benefited from online outside-class group work while lower performers failed to benefit” (p. 85). The study showed that higher performers spent extra time on the project, whereas the lower performing students were often discouraged from participating by their team members.

Hansen (2015) studied groups in both online and face-to-face courses in marketing and found that online students were more satisfied with their team experience. He determined that online student teams were more focused and obtained better objective performance because they were not distracted by the nonverbal cues found in face-to-face communication as well as the complexity of talking to people in person. (Hansen, 2015).

Chang and Lee (2013) found that virtual teams encountered more problems with cohesion and communication, especially upon team formation. Therefore, leadership is crucial to provide direction to work through team conflicts. As a result of the research found relating to group and team work, additional research relating to team work in online courses would add to the body of research on this topic.

The Study

This study was conducted during the fall 2015 semester in two online business courses taught at an AACSB-accredited college of business. This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. Qualtrics was used to design a survey with multiple choice, multiple answer, and open ended questions about the team online experience. At the end of the semester after students had worked with their groups, they were sent a link to the Qualtrics survey using the course's learning management system (LMS). One class was a sophomore business communication course with 24 of 34 students completing the survey for a rate of 70%. The second class was a junior level business ethics and society course, in which 41 of 58 students participated also resulting in a rate of 70%. In both courses the online groups were created by the instructors, and 78% of these groups had four members. The remaining groups consisted of two, three, or five members. Working on team projects in an online course was a new experience for 49% of the students who indicated this class was their first online team experience.

Findings

The survey asked a number of questions concerning the online team experience including the following:

1. What communication tools did your group use to work on your group project?
2. What has been the biggest challenge to group work in this course?
3. How can the team experience be improved in an online course?
4. What experience have you had with team projects in online courses?
5. What type of group projects would you prefer to have?
6. How would you like to provide feedback on team members' performances?
7. How involved should the instructor be when your team experiences problems?
8. What is your opinion about "firing" a team member?

Online teams used a variety of methods to communicate, but 86% of groups used the discussion board created in the LMS. Other methods of communication, in addition to the discussion board, include email within the LMS (40%), text messages (32%), other email messaging (17%), GoogleDocs (11%), meeting face-to-face (6%), and online videoconferencing (3%).

Teams reported that the biggest challenge to group work was coordinating schedules to submit, revise, and proofread work (46%). Students also noted 34% of groups experienced one or two people having to do all the work for the group, and 18% of students thought communication was the biggest challenge. Only one student indicated that a group member tried to dominate the group.

Open-ended questions allowed students to share their opinions about group work. One question asked how the team experience could be improved for an online course. Many students (23%) stated that requiring specific meeting times through any medium such as face-to-face, Skype, or chat would improve team performance. An additional 6% wanted at least one required face-to-face meeting. Another issue seemed to be the suggested method of communication using the LMS discussion board. Many students (15%) thought the LMS was insufficient for group work and that personal email, texting, or other forms of communication would have helped students stay in better contact. Other student responses were more varied and included comments such as making group work optional, changing group membership during the semester, monitoring communication by the instructor, and allowing students to pick their own groups.

When asked about the type of projects to be offered, 48% of students preferred to have several small projects due throughout the semester. The next highest choice was one large project due near the end of the semester, but with several smaller parts of the project due at designated times throughout the semester (35%). Only 17% of students wanted only one large project due near the end of the semester.

When discussing feedback on team member performance, only 3% of students wanted complete control over the grade assigned to other group members. Alternately, 78% wanted to provide feedback on group members' performance but let the instructor make the final decisions on individual grades. Regarding how to provide this feedback, 53% of students wanted to provide team member evaluations halfway through the project because they felt it would encourage non-performers to participate. Another 25% wanted to provide this incremental feedback, but were concerned about doing so anonymously. The remaining 22% of students wanted to only evaluate others at the end of the project.

When groups experienced problems, 50% of students responded that they wanted the instructor to become involved only when requested to do so by several group members. Of the remaining students, 20% believed the group should guide its own activities, discussions, and progress. However, 16% wanted the instructor to become involved when only one group member requests help; in addition, 14% of students thought the instructor should be very involved and monitor postings and messages between group members.

When asked about "firing" a group member, the results were split: 47% did not believe a group member should be fired because group members should learn to work together, but 41% believed group members should be able to be fired and that the person would have to complete the project individually. The remaining 13% thought group members should be able to be fired and receive a zero for the assignment.

In open-ended questions, students were also asked to describe how this online group was more difficult than a face-to-face group. Scheduling was the most difficult issue indicated by 29% of students. Other issues included communication problems with delays in messaging (21%) and issues with equal participation from all members (11%). Other comments included not getting to know team members personally and a lack of structure.

Additionally, only 65% of students believed they would be working in online team projects in their anticipated job after graduation.

Discussion

Instructors suggest using the LMS for team discussions and for documentation of communications between team members. This allows the instructor to become involved, if needed, and can support evaluations. Students are using the LMS as suggested (40%), but many groups were able to find other ways to communicate (e.g., text, email, GoogleDocs, face-to-face, and videoconferencing) to meet their individual needs. When a group functions effectively, it is not necessary that the LMS is used. However, when the group has issues, but communicates in a media form other than LMS that the instructor cannot monitor, it is difficult for the instructor to follow the group process and dynamics and become involved if needed. Students' comments indicate a disconnect between the expectations for the assignment and the reality of how the team really worked on the assignment. Based on written comments, students stated setting specific times to meet (e.g., face-to-face or online) would help improve the overall group experience; however, students also commented that diverse schedules made working on deadlines more difficult. Students want the opportunity to meet, but they may be unable to because finding a designated time may be difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish.

Strategies to Meet Challenges

Our students have diverse needs and expectations, and our survey results show just how different the students can be. Just as every face-to-face class has its own personality, so does the online class. Students' opinions differ as to what is 'ideal' in an online team environment, so instructors should offer a variety of ways to engage students in teamwork. Some suggestions to provide this variety include:

1. Assign brief activities as soon as a team is formed so they can begin the process of working together. For example, one activity could be to tell the team that they are like a triangle or box. Ask them to communicate to indicate the three points (triangle) or four points (box) that define their particular team. Then they should post this assignment to their discussion by a certain time. Some weekly exercises like this could help the team become acquainted before they start on a major project.

2. Have the students select a team director or leader who will be directing and coordinating the work that needs to be done.

3. The team director/leader can suggest various tasks that need to be finished and ask team members to pick the ones they think they can most successfully perform.

4. The director/leader can assign intermediate dates for all team members to submit their parts of the work before the actual due date.

5. One of the tasks could be to have one team member serve as the main contact to the instructor. This person could communicate with the instructor and serve as a conduit to the team when issues arise.

6. The instructor could require that teams use the team discussion of the LMS to post the information about how the work will be distributed and who will be doing what. Then, if the team wished to use other methods of communication, the instructor would have some idea of the progress of the team.

7. Evaluation of team members can be a challenge for students. The reward for working effectively on the team would be a higher level of points than a student who did not work effectively. As mentioned earlier, some students do not want to evaluate in-process and want to wait until the end while others think interim evaluations could be helpful. One idea the instructor might try is to have interim evaluations throughout the project. For example, if the instructor normally assigned 30 points for team interaction at the end of the project, an interim process could to divide the 30 points into three 10 point steps. After the draft of the project, a 10-point evaluation would be conducted. After the final draft of the project, another 10-point evaluation would take place, and after a presentation related to the project, another 10-point evaluation could occur. A simple pattern would be to have each team member fill out an evaluation with three criteria: prompt and effective communication with good attitude (up to 2 points); on-time submission of work (up to 4 points); and, quality of work submitted—was it usable by the team (up to 4 points). Then the evaluations from each team member would be averaged. A team member could then see that they lost points for quality or for timeliness. If they did not do the interim evaluation, they would receive no points. As you progress through the projects, the team members are being evaluated as they go. There would then be no final team evaluation.

These strategies are just some of the ideas that could be used to make the online team experience more effective. Asking students for additional ideas could be another way to improve the performance of the team experience. For many students, they will be seeing a great deal of virtual team performance in their future careers. Educators can use these suggested strategies to help prepare students to meet the needs of future employers. Learning the sought-after soft skills of working in a team environment will prepare students for online work in their future careers.

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