

Using and assessing an experiential learning project in a retail marketing course

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ABSTRACT

Business educators have been challenged recently to provide increased experiential learning opportunities for students. Proponents of experiential-based learning subscribe to the view that such experiences engage students actively in the learning process, and because of the linkage between practice and theory, better prepare students for the “real world.” At the same time, there are major impediments to using experiential learning projects in the context of a university system with a formal curriculum. Significant time commitments, uncertainty of the educational outcomes of such experiences, and potential negative end-of-term evaluations associated with the use of innovative teaching methods may collectively dissuade faculty from using active-learning projects in practice.

This paper provides a descriptive account of the process used to develop and implement an experiential learning project, in the form of a student consultancy project in an upper-level retail marketing course. This process consisted of three primary phases or steps: pre-course planning (including development of project objectives), project implementation, and project assessment. The project in question dealt with decisions associated with an impending relocation of a retail establishment and was completed by students on a small-group basis. Assessment data, from various stakeholder groups, suggests that the project was successful in terms of a pre-specified set of educational objectives. As such, this paper should be of interest to those who would like to develop a similar project in a retail marketing course or to those interested in developing consulting-based projects in other business courses.

Keywords: retail marketing, experiential learning, consultancy projects, new course development, assessment

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There is a growing consensus among business educators and practitioners that higher education in business is deficient in terms of preparing students for actual jobs that exist for them in the environment outside of academe. A body of research has emerged in recent years establishing that passive learning does not facilitate critical thinking and communication skills sufficiently, and that experiential learning projects are one of the best ways to bridge the gap between the learning activity students engage in within a classroom and employer expectations concerning job qualifications (Clark and White, 2010).

Recognizing the need for business students to have practical, hands-on experience, the standards of AACSB International (2008) specifically address the learning process in terms of both the level of student involvement, and the need for collaborative learning, as follows: The most effective learning takes place when students are involved in their educational experiences. Passive learning is ineffective and of short duration. Faculty members should develop techniques and styles that engage students and make students responsible for meeting learning goals. Many pedagogical approaches are suitable for challenging students... in this way problem-based learning, projects, simulations, etc. Faculty members should find such approaches that are suited to their subject matter, and should adopt active learning methodologies... Where possible, faculty members should encourage students to collaborate. Students should have both formal and informal opportunities to develop cooperative work skills. Intellectual tasks in some parts of the program should require collaborative learning.

Experiential Learning and Professional Education: Benefits and Challenges

The term “experiential learning” can be defined as “the process of learning by experience” (Harsell and O’Neill, 2010) and has been a basis for justifying any number of teaching practices ranging from internships (Dillon et al., 2011) to student-run businesses (Robinson et al., 2010; Tompkins et al., 2010). It is seen as much more holistic than passive learning because it incorporates consciousness and subjective experience into the process, allowing experience to play a central role in merging perception, affect, cognition and behavior (McCarthy, 2010).

The growing awareness of the importance of experiential learning among educators in higher education is largely driven by outcome assessment and the growing perception among employers that graduates of business schools are lacking in necessary professionalism (Nunamaker, 2007). A report on “Recruiters’ Perceptions of Undergraduate Business Schools and Students,” conducted by Wake Forest University (2004), contains recruiter perceptions of undergraduate business schools and students. The report from 114 recruiters who were asked to identify “the most important competencies for undergraduate business students” they consider when recruiting such students showed that the most important competencies are “general management skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, leadership, working effectively in teams, analytical/critical thinking skills, people and task–management skills, and self-management.” Experiential-based assignments, when properly formulated and executed, can aid in the development of these stakeholder-valued competencies.

In spite of stakeholder expectations and the apparent educational benefits of experiential learning projects, marketing faculty may be reluctant to offer such opportunities to their students.

Instructors may view such projects as risky and time-consuming, and may be hesitant to undertake the challenge of incorporating such experiences into their courses. Other potential risks include the level of possible frustration students will experience as they deal with instructional problems, the increased frequency of instructor-student interactions during the term of the project, and possible negative end-of-term student evaluations.

Experiential Learning: Conceptual Foundations

The father of modern day experiential learning theory and practice is David A. Kolb (1984), who proposed that experiential learning should consist of four specific learning abilities: (1) concrete experience; (2) reflective observation; (3) abstract conceptualization; and (4) active experimentation. These four abilities do not constitute a continuum or cycle. The learner can engage in any of the four abilities in any order, so long as the learner engages in all of them within the context of the learning experience.

Concrete experience requires that learners process stimuli, responses, and consequences through their senses and cognitive memory storage. Reflective observation involves retrieving memories and elaborating on the experiences. During abstract conceptualization the learner applies theoretical principles to observed phenomena, applying in-depth thinking and problem-solving skills to problems presented. Finally, active experimentation means that the learner utilizes trial and error to solve problems and arrive at new solutions. Numerous researchers have used this framework for developing and evaluating experiential learning programs in business secondary education (see, for examples, Wells et al., 1991; Sims et al., 1989).

A number of subsequent researchers have set forth more specific objectives that experiential learning programs should aspire to achieve. For example, Ives and Obenchain (2006) propose that experiential education should comprise three key components: opportunities for students to engage in self-direction; connections to the real world; and, critical reflection of their experiences. Other researchers have simplified things by suggesting that experiential learning programs should “go real, go deep and get feedback” (Kickul et al., 2010).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Guided by the literature summarized above, the overall goal of the project was to respond to university stakeholder demands, by enriching the learning experience of the students. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge in business education by providing a useful framework for faculty who might want to develop and implement similar projects.

The project was a student-based consulting project, which provided students with an opportunity to be exposed to the strategic marketing aspects of a business while interacting with business practitioners in a client-consultant setting. From a pedagogical perspective, students who complete such projects should be better able to link theory with practice, and thus improve their professional skills. Assessment evidence obtained from our students (and reported elsewhere in this paper) confirmed these benefits.

Given the need for the project to stimulate the learning modes identified by Kolb (1984) and expanded upon by later researchers, the course instructor developed a framework for developing the project in three distinct phases. The first phase was the planning phase, during which the course objectives and a timetable were developed. The second phase was the implementation phase, during which the students engaged in the project based on a systematic

process that encouraged all four types of experiential learning. The third and final phase was the implementation phase, during which the project was assessed by all interested stakeholders. A summary of the phases is shown in Table 1 (Appendix).

The Student Context

The project took place at a medium-sized AACSB-accredited state university, with approximately 1,400 undergraduate business students. The Retail Marketing course had an enrollment of 40; the average age of students in the class was 22. Approximately 80 percent of the students work at least half-time. Almost half of the students in the course were marketing majors while the remaining students were Fashion Design students from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Prior to the start of the semester, the professor was approached by the owners of a local Italian restaurant to provide assistance with the future direction of the business. The owners were contemplating a relocation of the restaurant and recognized various strategically important decisions that had to be made in conjunction with the proposed move. The owners were seeking consulting support from the university since they could not afford to pay an external consultant.

The Business Decision Setting

According to the owners, their current customers could be grouped into two categories: young families, and age 50+ couples, most of whom are budget-constrained. The owners' overall desire was to bring more young people into their restaurant, while maintaining their current customer base. The existing restaurant occupied 3,000 square feet, had seating for 90 patrons, served wine and beer, but did not have a license to sell hard liquor.

Following are questions the owners conveyed to the instructor as the owners pondered how to broaden the appeal of their restaurant and whether, in fact, to re-locate the restaurant: (1) How can we attract a younger market, in particular, 18-25 year-old dating couples? (2) What should the new store layout and design look like? What kind of atmosphere should the new location provide? (3) How much should the menu be changed? Should the restaurant continue to offer a salad bar? (4) Given that the proposed new location would occupy 4,000 square feet, should there be a bar area in the restaurant? If so, how should it be designed and how large should this area be? (5) How should the new store be announced and promoted?

PHASE I: PRE-COURSE PLANNING

Phase I of course design consisted of two pre-course planning tasks: determining project objectives, and developing operational steps (and a timetable) for the student consulting project.

Determining Project Objectives

When considering an experiential-learning project, the first task was to determine project objectives from the larger set of educational objectives for the course. Based on the course objectives, the instructor determined the following project objectives:

1. Provide students with an appreciation of the daily operations of a retail operation.
2. Permit students to identify and collect decision-relevant data from customers and non-customers.

3. Give students the opportunity to provide input in making a strategic decision for the relocation and layout of a retail establishment.
4. Within the constraints of a limited budget, develop promotional ideas for a client's business.

Phase I concluded with the establishment of a timetable and set of operational steps for the project along with assigned responsibility, which is detailed in Table 2.

PHASE II: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

During Phase II focused on gaining a deep understanding of the client's problem(s) as well as the capabilities of the students enrolled in the course. Students want to be challenged, but instructors need to be realistic about what they can or cannot do or perform for the client. The actual project implementation plan used in the present case is discussed below.

In-Class Client Presentation

To begin the formal project, the client made an in-class presentation to the students in the class. This was extremely valuable in serving as a motivator for the students. The owner explained the history of the restaurant, the menu and operations of the restaurant, the current customer base, and the desire of the owners to relocate and broaden the appeal of the restaurant. The owner distributed summary financial statements of the restaurant to the students, and candidly answered questions regarding profitability of menu items, operational challenges (e.g. how to introduce a new system for busboys), and employee-related issues (such as employee turnover). A valuable outcome of this exercise was an agreement between the client and the students on expectations and deliverables. Specifically, the client agreed to provide the students with any relevant information the students needed for the project, including strategic and financial data. Students were informed by the owners that some areas were "off limits" in terms of being changeable. These items included the potential square footage of the new store and certain menu staples.

Student Assessment of the Client's Business

In an experiential learning project, students should be expected to utilize their critical-thinking and analytical skills to evaluate the client's business (Peterson, 1996). In this case, the students were required to have a meal at the restaurant and to submit to the instructor a written analysis of this experience. Students were also asked to include in their analysis an overview of their academic and professional backgrounds. This information was used by the instructor to form "working groups."

As a result of student written evaluations of the client's business, the instructor developed a comprehensive list of the student-perceived weaknesses of the restaurant. This list was shared with the entire class. The instructor felt these perceptions should be shared with all student groups, since oversights can occur under different conditions, such as how busy the restaurant was during the visit of a particular group.

Formation of Retail “Working Groups”

After evaluating the individual papers and reviewing student backgrounds, the instructor placed all students into one of four working groups: (1) store layout and design; (2) store operations and menu; (3) store image and promotion; and (4) market research. These groups were determined based on the nature of the business and the strategic decision students were being asked to evaluate. In addition, the instructor believed this was the most effective strategy for generating the greatest results for the client, while at the same time allowing students the experience of working in teams.

Working Group Written Reports

The instructor advised the working groups that they were to deal with short-term as well as long-term plans for the restaurant. For the next three weeks the groups met and discussed the direction the relocated restaurant might take in each of the four areas. Eventually, each of the groups produced a written analysis and set of recommendations for the restaurant.

Marketing Research Working Group

The “marketing research” group began with the goal of understanding the customer and prospective customers of the restaurant. Students in this group developed separate questionnaires for current customers and for those from the proposed new target group, 18–25 year-old dating couples.¹

In an attempt to better understand what potential customers would be looking for, two sections of an “Introduction to Business” course at the university were selected to complete a “potential-customer” questionnaire. The “potential-customer questionnaire” was different from the current-customer questionnaire. This is because one of the primary objectives of a potential customer is to determine the level of awareness of the target market and to determine what it would take for a potential customer to become a customer. The questionnaire was designed with the idea of identifying what criteria targeted customers would be applying when deciding on a restaurant to visit.

Store Layout and Design Working Groups

A customer’s first impression of a restaurant is the visual impact upon entering the premises. Because a positive impression is critical, much thought needs to be given to interior design and layout. The instructor decided to mix the composition of the store design and layout groups between marketing and interior design majors. This allowed students the opportunity to understand the creative as well as the strategic decisions that need to be made in the design and layout of the new store. Students in the two groups suggested ideas for both the exterior and the interior of the restaurant. Ideas for the exterior included such things as a larger parking lot, more attractive landscaping, a wider entrance way, and more lighting in the parking lot. Ideas for the interior included placement of the salad bar against the wall to clearly separate the smoking area; the use of green, white, and red colors to portray an Italian theme and atmosphere; and use of additional lighting and wider aisles.

¹Both survey instruments are available, on request, from the authors.

Store Operations and Menu Working Groups

Many factors influence the perceptions of customers on their first visit to a new restaurant. Among other things, customers evaluate the quality and breadth of the menu as well as operational characteristics evidenced by service and cleanliness. The “operations and menu” working groups made recommendations for improving store operations and for the redesign of the menu. Some of the suggestions for store operations were to: install a pager system to alert servers when orders are ready, develop/use weekly worksheets for staff, delegate responsibility for the register to others besides the owners, implement a delivery option, establish cost controls, and require an employee dress code. The following suggestions were made for the menu: identify the founder of the restaurant on the cover, reorganize and combine areas on menu, use different fonts and reduce the number of graphics on the menu, develop a more attractive wine list, and expand the list of appetizers.

Store Image and Promotion Working Groups

A key component of the plan was the development of a promotional strategy for the new restaurant and creating a positive image in the mind of the customer. The two “store-image and promotion” groups developed a short-term promotional plan to draw in new customers and a long-term promotional plan for the new location. Short-term promotional ideas included: use of a business card fishbowl for weekly drawings for a free lunch, sponsorship of little league and school teams, implementation of happy-hour prices, creation of special prices on certain nights for kids, sponsorship of a coloring contest for kids, and the use of more festive decorations on various holidays throughout the year.

An example of the creativity of one of the groups was their suggestion that three months before the proposed relocation waitresses should wear a t-shirt with “Guess What” on the front, and “We’re moving!” on the back. A silk-screened company truck loading up the contents of the current restaurant would also be featured on the back of the shirt in the store colors. For the new store’s Grand Opening both groups suggested having both a soft and a hard opening.

Student Peer Assessments

After each working group handed in its written report, students were asked to evaluate each group member’s contribution to the group, using a group member assessment form. The instructor met with the students who were identified by their peers as not doing their fair share. These students were warned of the consequences of such “unacceptable behavior” (as detailed on the syllabus for the course).

Formation of Final Teams

For the last phase of the project, the professor decided how to organize the two teams. She ultimately mixed the seven intact working groups into two final teams of 20 students. In formulating these teams, the marketing research group was split: half of the students went to Team 1 while the other half went to Team 2.

Final Presentation to Client

The end-of-term consulting report to the client reflected the compromising, negotiating and determination one expects with a large-team effort. In addition to the written report, each team prepared and made an in-class end-of-term oral presentation to the client and selected stakeholders. These presentations were videotaped; each team had a time limit of 45 minutes for its presentation followed by 15 minutes to answer questions from those attending the presentation.

PHASE III: PROJECT ASSESSMENT

The final phase of the project related to the development of a comprehensive assessment plan, which is critical for several reasons. First, faculty using consulting-based projects could utilize such feedback to garner future support from their deans and chairs for such projects. Second, faculty need to determine whether their projects achieve their planned-for educational objectives, and whether projects are viewed by students and other stakeholders as worthy of a faculty member's time and effort. Third, positive assessment from stakeholders may lead to ideas and contacts for future projects. Finally, whether such efforts are called experience-based, active learning, or service learning, AACSB International as a condition for accreditation requires the establishment of programmatic learning goals, the measurement of the achievement of those goals, and the use of the information obtained to improve and enhance the program (AACSB, 2008). Course-level assessment results can influence future decisions regarding course and project design, thereby supporting the goal of continuous improvement. Thus, a comprehensive assessment plan can play an important role in the overall program accreditation process.

In the present case, the comprehensive assessment plan for the project consisted of a combination of measures, including peer assessments, self-assessments, and stakeholder assessments, as described below. These examples are offered for possible use by other faculty who are interested in developing their own experiential learning projects.

End-of-Project Self- and Peer-Assessments

At the end of the term, each member of the two student teams completed another "Group Member Assessment Form." Each student was also asked to complete a "Student Self-Assessment Instrument" (Appendix, Figure 1). The instrument had two purposes: (1) to determine whether the project was viewed by the student as a valuable experience, and (2) to assess whether, in the student's opinion, the experience helped to accomplish the objectives of the Retail Marketing course.

Stakeholder Assessment of the Experiential Learning Project

The instructor invited both internal and external stakeholders of the university to the end-of-term oral presentations. The authors developed a "Stakeholder Assessment Instrument" (Appendix, Figure 2) that contained a restatement of the course objectives. The instrument asked stakeholders their perceptions regarding the extent to which the project supported each of these objectives. Another section of the instrument asked respondents to rate the likely effect of the project on improving various skills and abilities, including oral communication, written

communication, decision making, critical thinking and analytical capability. These evaluation dimensions were derived from the stated mission of the college of business.

The instructor also desired feedback from stakeholders regarding each team's oral presentation. Since improvement of written and oral communications is a priority of the college, a separate Oral Presentation Evaluation Instrument was developed to obtain stakeholder assessments.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Student Self-Assessments

The results of the Student Self-Assessment (Appendix, Table 3) indicate that the project was perceived as beneficial in terms of helping to accomplish the specified set of educational objectives for the Retail Marketing course. Course objectives that received a lower evaluation, e.g., "vendor relationships," in reality did not relate to the consultancy project. They were addressed by way of other aspects of the course. The students' perceived value of the project in terms of improving oral and written communication abilities was lower than one might expect, but this may be attributed to the fact that only 5–6 members of each 20- person team actually participated in the end-of-term oral presentation.

Student comments from the narrative section of the instrument support the results reported in Table 3 (Appendix). That is, the project was viewed as beneficial in terms of providing an exciting opportunity for students, in a small-team environment, to gain real-world experience.

Student Peer Assessments

In team-based assignments, it is important for instructors to be assured that all students on a team participate and that the team did not have too many "leaders" or "followers." As can be expected, there were relationship-oriented problems with students on each of the two large teams. On one team one of the two coordinators attempted to exert too much power over the entire team. One member of the team referred to him as a "dictator." The same team experienced conflict regarding the development of the menu and ended up submitting two versions because team members could not come to an agreement.

Stakeholder Assessment

Stakeholder responses (Appendix, Table 4) provide confirmatory evidence regarding the value of the project in terms of the set of planned-for educational objective. When comparing the student self-assessments (Appendix, Table 3), the stakeholders believed that the project had a far greater effect on the oral and written communication skills of the students than the students did. All stakeholder-respondents felt similar type projects should be continued in the future.

Assessment of Oral Presentation

The audience made up of students, external stakeholders, and faculty viewed and critiqued the oral presentations very positively. While the stakeholders evaluated one team

presentation more favorably than the others, they were quite pleased with the presentations from each of the two large teams.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY

Faculty who might be interested in using a consulting-based project in their own course might wonder where and/or how they might be able to find such projects for their students. The first place to look would be their Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which usually has a collection of clients seeking assistance. Other sources for client projects would be SCORE, Business Incubators, Business School Advisory Boards, and SIFE sponsors. Other specific recommendations for faculty interested in using a consulting-based project in their own course:

- The instructor needs to stick to the established timetable and develop checkpoints to stay on task. It is too easy for a faculty member to cave in and give additional time for students, recognizing that it very well may cause problems later on in the project.
- Students need to be encouraged to interact with the client as much as possible, provided the client is willing to have an on-going working relationship with the students. In the present case study, students found the behind-the-scene tours of the kitchen and the perusal of the maitre de computer package valuable to understanding the operational issues facing the restaurant.
- With respect to the groups, the authors suggest that a coordinator be designated for the group and that this role be rotated periodically to allow every member to lead the group. Consideration might also be given to the option of “firing” members who are not doing their fair share. Alternatively, student assessments of peer performance could be factored into each student’s grade for this semester-long project.
- Regarding the oral presentation, first-year business students should be invited to attend the presentation so they can anticipate and envision what they will be doing in a few years. Also, faculty of the various student majors in the class (in this case the Fashion Design Department) should be extended an invitation as well. This will also serve as a vehicle for collaboration between colleges.

SUMMARY

This project was divided into three primary phases: pre-course planning, project implementation, and project assessment. Assessment results from the project indicate that the students and stakeholders believed it to be a valuable and rewarding educational experience. The overwhelming majority of assessors agreed that similar projects should be used in the future. The outline and general procedures provided in this paper can be used to guide the project development, implementation, and assessment process. With some ingenuity and forethought, the materials used in the retail marketing course (i.e., Table 1 and Table 2) can be adapted to courses in other functional areas, including entrepreneurship and small business management.

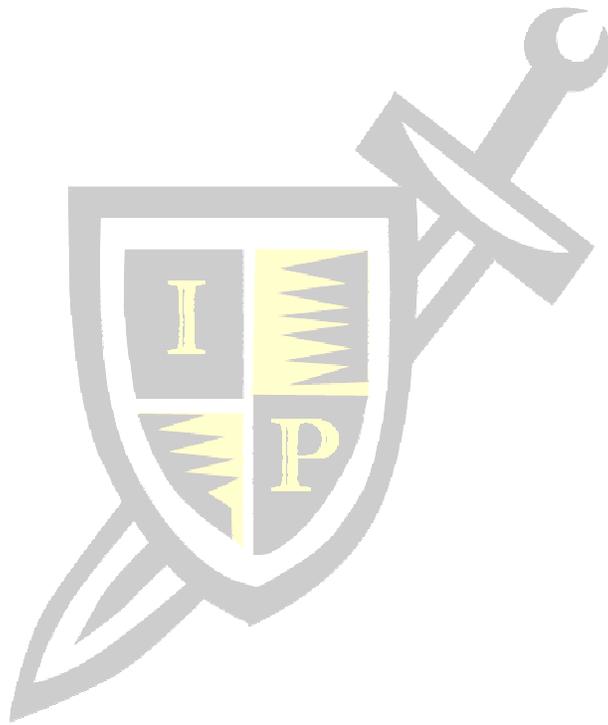
As business school constituencies continue to encourage more experienced-based learning activities, there has been an increasing interest among marketing and other business

educators to assist in such activities (Smart et al., 1999). At the same time, many business faculty, including marketing professors, may be hesitant to incorporate experiential learning activities into the formal curriculum. Hopefully, this account of a successful team-based consultancy project will be helpful to faculty who may be interested in developing a similar project.

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Appendix

Table 1: Three-Phase Plan for a Consulting-Based Project in Retail Marketing

PHASE I: Pre-Course Planning	PHASE II: Project Implementation	PHASE III: Project Assessment
Determine Project Objectives	In-Class Client Presentation to Students	Stakeholder Assessment of the Project
Develop Operational Steps and Timetable for the Project	Student Assessment of the Client's Business	Use of Assessment Results
	Formation of Retail "Working Groups"	
	Submission of Working Group Reports	
	Student Assessment of Fellow Group Members	
	Final Team Formation	
	Final Oral Presentations to Client and Submission of Team Consulting Reports to the Instructor	

Table 2: Suggested Operational Steps and Timeline for Retail Marketing Project (15-Week Semester)

WEEK(S)	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Present an overview of the project to students in the class; communicate to students grading criteria for the oral and written reports.	INSTRUCTOR
2	Business owner(s) make in-class presentation to students.	CLIENT/BUSINESS OWNER
3-5	On-site visit to the client's business; written assessment of the experience.	STUDENTS (DUE WEEK 5)
6-9	Assign students to one of several specified "working groups" (where the number of groups is based on the identified needs of the business and the backgrounds of students in the class; in the present case, there were four different working groups, (e.g., store operations).	INSTRUCTOR
	Each working group develops and submits to the instructor a written analysis of a specified area, including short-term and long-term plans.	STUDENTS (DUE WEEK 9)
10	Reconfigure working groups into two large teams, each of which will develop a comprehensive report for the client; determine team coordinators for each of the two teams.	INSTRUCTOR
11	Make arrangements for in-class oral presentation by each of the two teams.	INSTRUCTOR
11-14	Each student team develops and submits to the instructor and to the client a final written project report.	STUDENTS (DUE WEEK 14)
15	In-class oral presentations made to the client and selected other stakeholders.	STUDENTS
	Collection of assessment data from stakeholders.	INSTRUCTOR

Table 3: Student Self-Assessment Results
(N = 40)

<u>Course-Related Educational Objective</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>% 4 or 5</u>
To instill an appreciation for the institutional structure of retailing, past and probable future trends.	4.0	78
To introduce a strategic planning format to assist students in mastering the numerous decisions facing retail managers.	4.3	85
To expose the dynamic nature of competitors and customers in retail markets.	4.1	81
To provide a framework for understanding how retailers develop strategies to build competitive advantage and pursue growth opportunities.	4.5	94
To present approaches for analyzing long-term financial performance.	4.1	74
In terms of developing strategic advantage, an understanding of the importance of:		
Location	4.5	86
Organization structure and human resource management	4.4	86
Vendor relationships	3.9	69
Customer service	4.6	94
Rate the perceived value of the project in terms of developing:		
Oral Communication Skills	3.8	66
Written Communication Skills	3.8	63
Critical Thinking Ability	4.4	88
Decision-Making skills	4.5	88
Analytical Skills	4.2	87

On a scale of 1–10 (1 = lowest, 10 = highest), rate the overall educational value of the *Belleria* project: Average = 8.6; Percentage 8 or above = 88%

Recommend project in the future? Yes = 92%, No = 0%, Maybe = 8%

Scale: 1 = “did not help at all,” ..., 5 = “greatly helped.”



Table 4: Stakeholder Assessment Results: Perceived Effect of the Project on Course-Related Educational Objectives (n=9)

<u>Course-Related Educational Objective</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>% 4 or 5</u>
To instill an appreciation for the institutional structure of retailing, past and probable future trends.	4.5	100
To introduce a strategic planning format to assist students in mastering the numerous decisions facing retail managers.	4.8	100
To expose the dynamic nature of competitors and customers in retail markets.	4.2	100
To provide a framework for understanding how retailers develop strategies to build competitive advantages and pursue growth opportunities.	4.5	100
To present approaches for analyzing long-term financial performance.	3.8	50
In terms of developing strategic advantage an understanding of:		
Location	4.3	80
Organization structure and human resource management	4.3	62
Vendor relationships	3.5	50
Customer service	5.0	100
Rate the perceived value of the project in terms of:		
Oral Communication Skills	4.5	83
Written Communication Skills	4.4	80
Critical Thinking Ability	4.7	100
Decision-Making skills	4.7	88
Analytical Skills	4.7	100

On a scale of 1–10 (1 = lowest, 10 = highest), overall educational value of the Belleria project: Average = 9.5; percentage 8 or higher = 100

Recommend use of a similar type of project in the future? Yes = 100%

Scale: 1 = “did not help at all,” ..., 5 = “greatly helped.”



Figure 1: Student Self-Assessment Form

Name _____

Directions: Please circle the response corresponding to your self-assessment of the impact that the Belleria project had on each listed course objective.

<u>Course Objectives:</u>	Did not Help at all	1	2	Somewhat Helped	3	4	5	Greatly Helped	Don't Know/ No Opinion
To instill an appreciation for the institutional structure of retailing, past and probable future trends.	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
To introduce a strategic planning format to assist students in mastering the numerous decisions facing a retail manager.	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
To expose the dynamic nature of competitors and customers in retail markets.	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
To provide a framework for understanding how retailers develop strategies to build competitive advantages and pursue growth opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
To present approaches for analyzing long-term financial performance.	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
In terms of developing strategic advantage for a retail establishment, an understanding of the importance of:									
a) location	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
b) organization structure and human resource management	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
c) vendor relationships	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
d) customer service	1	2	3	4	5	NA			

Please use the indicated scale to rate the likely impact that the Belleria project had on improving for you each of the specified skills.

	No Impact	1	2	Mild Impact	3	4	5	Very Strong Impact	Don't Know/ No Opinion
1. Oral Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
2. Written Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
3. Critical Thinking Ability	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
4. Decision Making skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA			
5. Analytical Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA			

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 being the highest), please indicate your perception regarding the overall educational value of the Belleria Project. _____

Would you recommend a similar type of project in the future (check one response)?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

Why or why not?

Your Major (check one): Marketing _____ Other _____

Thank you for your help!

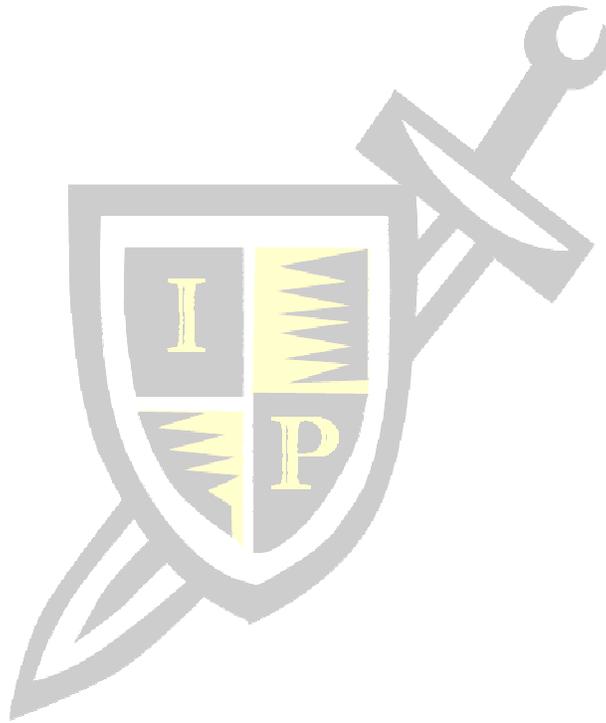


Figure 2: Stakeholder Assessment Form (Retail Marketing–Cornersburg Project)

Name: _____

Directions: Please rate, on a scale from one to five (1 – 5), your assessment of the impact of the Belleria project on the following course objectives.

	Did not Help at all	Helped Somewhat	Greatly Helped	Don't Know		
<u>Opinion</u>						
To instill an appreciation for the institutional structure of retailing, past and probable future trends.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
To introduce a strategic planning format to assist students in mastering the numerous decisions facing retail managers.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
To expose the dynamic nature of competitors and customers in retail markets.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
To provide a framework for understanding how retailers develop strategies to build competitive advantages and pursue growth opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
To present approaches for analyzing long-term financial performance.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
In terms of developing strategic advantage for a retail establishment, an understanding of the importance of:						
a) location	1	2	3	4	5	NA
b) organization structure and human resource management	1	2	3	4	5	NA
c) vendor relationships	1	2	3	4	5	NA
d) customer service	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Please use the indicated scale to rate the likely impact that the Belleria project had on improving each of the specified student skills.

	No Impact	Mild Impact	Very Strong Impact	Don't Know/ No Opinion		
1. Oral Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Written Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Critical Thinking Ability	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Decision Making skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Analytical Skills	1	2	3	4	5	NA

On a scale of 1–10 (1 being the lowest, 10 being the highest), please indicate your perception regarding the overall educational value of the Belleria Project. _____

Would you recommend a similar type of project in the future?

Yes_____ No_____ Maybe_____

Why or why not?

Respondent Information (check one): _____ faculty _____ staff _____ other

Thank you for your help!

