

MS Marketing Program

MARK 7397 Practical Marketing Analysis

Fall 2019

Learning Goals	Objective
Analytical Problem Solving Skills	Students will be able to articulate logical solutions to complex or unstructured marketing problems
Research Skills	Students will be able to identify appropriate information sources and/or data relevant to marketing-related issues
Written Communication	Students will demonstrate effective written communication skills when communicating marketing-related information
Oral Communication	Students will demonstrate effective oral communication skills when communicating marketing-related information

These are the learning goals we submitted to the university in establishing this degree program. Bauer judges the extent to which these learning goals are met via faculty evaluations of your project. You conduct that project in the MARK 7397 class you sign up for, normally during your last semester in the program. The class doesn't meet; it simply provides a means for you to get course credit for your project. I will help you to decide on that project.

Then after you complete your project, I and at least one other member of the Marketing & Entrepreneurship faculty will evaluate it as a written document and also your presentation of it. Please think about the project as a document you could proudly show to a potential employer, to explain what problem solving and research skills enabled you to conduct it. Please consider also that the faculty members to whom you present it may question you about what you did and what you would do differently/better if conducting a similar project in the future.

Suggestions (NOT exhaustive) ---

1. Find a real organization with a marketing-related problem to solve, decision to make, or action already taken that they would like to evaluate. Become an unpaid consultant and prepare a report, something like 15-20 pages plus a list of sources consulted (**be sure there are some, in addition to data from the organization itself, cited in the text of your paper**) and appendices that show your analytical work and anything else a reader might like to see. **Note: If you don't feel like an accountant while preparing your**

analysis, you are not doing what we have in mind. Any marketing approach you suggest is likely to cost money. The burden of suggesting a break-even payoff is yours, and is likely to involve estimating the lifetime value of a customer.

2. Understand the difference between any of those three undertakings above and simply being unpaid labor, which is NOT what we have in mind. You are not available to make calls promoting the organization, set up a Website, or merge datasets. You are analyzing a situation, using data.
3. If the organization wants to be anonymous in your report and presentation, that's fine; they become Company x. However, if so, I require a letter signed by someone in that organization saying that you did the project for them and that they requested anonymity.
4. Please start the process by talking with me about the project you have in mind. I will ask you to prepare a one-page summary that tells me what you plan to do, how you plan to do it, and (briefly) why it will be useful to the client organization. I will sign off on that when you have a version we both think is useful and can be accomplished as you plan. Then you can use that one-page description to recruit from the Marketing & Entrepreneurship faculty a second evaluator for your project. Every student presents to two of us: someone you select who agrees to take on that role, in addition to me.
5. Your project report should contain a statement of your objective in undertaking this project, enough background material that we understand the situation, then what you did, why you did it that way, what you found out, and what you conclude. The easiest way to frame the project is to compare two possible marketing expenditures, give the reader their actual costs, then calculate the break-even from both, based on how many customers would be required to offset the cost, or how many repeat customers, or some intermediate measure that you tie to potential revenue based on a justification that is based on your research, and/or historical data – something. Then you look at those two scenarios, tell the client which you recommend (or both), and why.
6. It's fine to ask for help from any faculty member in our Marketing & Entrepreneurship department, or from librarians at the UH Library, who are better than any of us at knowing what is online where. It's also fine to ask someone at the UH Writing Center to look over your report. With those exceptions, we expect the project to be a solo effort on your part.

Some concrete tips:

References

For anything that doesn't come out of your own head, you should have a reference, whether a link to an information source, an interview with the client, records from the clients, or an on-paper source. Those references should be listed at the end of the paper in the order in which you use them or alphabetically by last name of author. What's important to remember is that every time you refer to such a source, the reader should be able to immediately click on that source if it's online or see it in the back of your report on paper if it isn't online, or at least see what the source is. So you want to number every reference within the body of the paper, whether with superscripts or (1), (2), etc. – makes no difference. Another perfectly OK form is (Jones, 2018) if Jones wrote a report or article that you are citing.

If you use a numbering system, the reader can go to the reference list, and click on what you have listed as (2), for example, and verify that what you claim this source reported is actually what the source did report. This is, besides a consulting project, a research paper.

Thinking too narrowly

The cliché is that when your only tool is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. In this degree program, you learned a lot about online marketing. Therefore, it's tempting to focus your project there, but doing so may keep you from thinking about how to expand the total market, or about competition, or pricing, or improving the service your client offers, or location of gosh knows what. We expect you to at least show that you considered a range of issues before focusing on the marketing changes whose cost you will use to calculate a break-even scenario – and explain its assumptions along the way.

Getting feedback from your evaluators

Please within the first month of the semester or sooner talk with me about your project. Phone is OK if that's all we can work out: 713-444-0791. But I am used to meeting working students at a Starbucks near their job or whatever seems sensible. And within that first month, please develop a one-page summary of what you plan to do, why it will be helpful, and how you will proceed.

Once I approve that, you have the comfort of knowing "OK, I just have to do the work." You are then ready to recruit a second evaluator, who will want to know what s/he is signing on to

evaluate. And you are then ready to get to work, asking for help of either of us at any point or points along the way.

Here's the nub of whatever you do: justify one or more marketing expenditures by showing what it would require in the way of assumptions to break even on those expenditures. Excellent preparation if you are not confident is Professor Stephen Wilbur's class: ENTR 7336 Entrepreneurship Overview.

Just as an example -- I sent this advice to a student who wants to draw customers to a shop on a Caribbean island reached by small commuter plane. Please see if it helps, OK?

Part of the paper must be showing the break-even for how any new marketing expenditure will pay for itself, in very specific terms. Example: the airline that brings tourists will charge the shop \$5,000 annually to stack flyers in the waiting area people sit in before boarding. A customer is worth \$50 to the shop based on the following calculation: the average sale is \$100 and COGS is 50%. So annually the shop would need to obtain 100 customers from this investment before breaking even on it. The airline says they fly 1,000 passengers a year, but there is no way to know how many are tourists. If half are (best guess when you have no clue), that's 500 tourists. So one in five would have to come to the store for this expenditure to break even. Also, lots of tourists fly in pairs, presumably, so 500 tourists may really mean fewer than 500 purchasing households, after all.

Obviously, I made up all the numbers. And it's up to the client to look at your scenario and think: WOULD one in five come to the store? You don't have to make the case that it would break even or do better than that. You just have to lay out the numbers as accurately as possible.

At least a month before the end of the semester, let's agree on a date and time for your presentation at a time convenient for you and both of us who are your evaluators. Sooner is OK too. Please plan on one hour, although you will present only for half of that time and the other half is for our questions and comments.

Questions? Betsy Gelb, gelb@uh.edu

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