FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL MARKETING DEPARTMENT HEAD

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ABSTRACT

The position of the department head has been characterized as critical to the operation of colleges and universities. Departmental leadership is critical to the morale of the faculty and the general social climate in the academic unit.

Department heads may make as many as four-fifths of the administrative decisions in colleges and universities that are related to budgets, faculty evaluations and appointments, class schedules, curriculum management, crisis management, merit raises, and other delegated responsibilities that are not part of the requirements for the majority of faculty. These decisions are accompanied by high performance expectations from faculty and administration. Yet, most department heads lack any formal training for the position. The myriad of responsibilities, high expectations, and lack of training indicate a need to study the perceived role requirements of the position. This study examines the abilities and characteristics of marketing department heads that are perceived as crucial for effectiveness in the position.

An Internet survey instrument was created to analyze faculty and head perceptions of department head effectiveness. A systematic random sample of faculty and heads at AACSB Departments of Marketing yielded a usable sample of 247 full-time marketing faculty members and 43 department heads from 167 universities. The questionnaire included 15 department head personality characteristics and 31 department head abilities. These items were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (not absolutely crucial to the department head’s overall effectiveness) to 7 (absolutely crucial to the department head’s overall effectiveness).

The five most crucial department head attributes were found to be:
- Possesses integrity (6.78)
- Honest (6.75)
- Fair (6.71)
- Good listener (6.17)
- Open-minded (6.09)

The five least crucial department head attributes were found to be:
- Empathetic (5.59)
- Compassionate (5.29)
- Innovative (4.93)
- Charismatic (4.23)
- Humorous (3.90)

The five most crucial department head abilities were found to be:
- Evaluating faculty fairly (6.75)
- Treating faculty with respect (6.65)
- Ability to represent the department to central administration (6.41)
- The ability to say no when necessary (6.21)
- Enthusiasm for the department (6.20)

The five least crucial department head attributes were found to be:
- Department head’s teaching skills (4.46)
- Ability to generate funding from private sources (4.30)
- Department head’s research skills (4.10)
- Knowledge of current literature in the field (4.03)
- Keeps faculty informed about legal issues (4.02)

Implications for marketing faculty, department heads, and university administrators are discussed.