PUT BUSINESS BACK IN MARKETING EDUCATION

Mary Anne Raymond, Pacific Lutheran University
David E. McNabb, Pacific Lutheran University
C. Frederick Matthaei, Pacific Lutheran University

Abstract

Employers of recent graduates of university marketing programs are dissatisfied with the skills and abilities graduates bring to the workplace. It is the responsibility of marketing educators to develop a curriculum and employ teaching methods which enable students to gain the skills, abilities and knowledge that employers desire. To meet this responsibility, a restructuring of the business school curriculum may be required. This study expands on previous research identifying desired skills and the teaching methods most appropriate for helping students become prepared to enter and succeed in their careers. Self-administered questionnaires asked samples of students and employers to rate the importance of various skills and abilities on seven point noncomparative rating scales. Both groups were also asked to identify the most important job-related attributes/skills needed by new workers, and to rank order teaching methods in terms of effectiveness for imparting the most important skills. Convenience samples of 165 students, 58% of whom were marketing majors, and 42 businesses were surveyed. The student sample was drawn from two universities on the West and East coast of the US. The employer sample represented small, medium and large businesses (services, manufacturers, & consumer-oriented) on the West and East coasts. Almost 42% of the employers reported skills in written communications were most important for new hires; 24% said interpersonal skills were most important; 10% said enthusiasm was most important. Students said they believed oral communications skills were most important, followed by written skills and interpersonal skills. Employers reported that the functional knowledge of business that students receive at business schools was the greatest strength they bring to the workplace. Other important skills they bring include computer skills, a strong motivation for success and good quantitative skills. The biggest weakness of new graduates is lack of prior work experience, followed by poor writing skills. Lectures were considered the least effective way of imparting desired skills; most effective were team projects and internships.