THE IMPACT OF JOURNAL WRITING ON STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE PERSONAL SELLING COURSE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Casey L. Donoho, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011 (520) 523-7393
Michael J. Swenson, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 (801) 378-2799

ABSTRACT

We present the educational value of engaging personal selling students in a specific form of writing to learn—the keeping of a journal. Additionally, we propose a process that suggests that journal writing has the potential to contribute to learning in the personal selling course through written reflection and reaction to a wide variety of personal selling events. This process provides the additional advantage of timely feedback with which the teacher can tailor future events to meet particular class learning needs. The pedagogical approach is tested for its effect on student evaluations of the personal selling course.

The journal originated with the writings of individuals who kept systematic records of their thoughts and experiences. Science evolved from the astute observations made by individuals over the entire record of human history. Aristotle, Socrates, Ptolemy, Eratosthenes, Euclid, Archimedes, Pythagoras and his followers, Galileo, Copernicus, William Harvey, Sir Isaac Newton, to mention just a few, were persons of such ability with respect to observation, that whole revolutions in scientific and mathematical thought began due to their written records.

In the personal selling curriculum, a learning journal is a record written by a student which reflects attitudes, feelings, and expansion of his/her cognitive learning throughout the course. Journals become for the student an effective learning tool: they maximize learning and hone writing skills. Ultimately, the student journal serves to connect the student with self, with the faculty, with professional selling, and with business. For many students, the journal represents the building of a personal, conceptual framework of personal selling, a reconciliation of the disparity between the theoretical and the actual.

An experiment was conducted by the authors in two sections of the personal selling class. Journal writing was required in one section (n=24), but not in the other (i.e., control) section (n=33). For the journal writing section, eight journal entries were required which were worth 15 percent of the total grade. The entries included responses to academic, simulated, and field settings. The research findings indicate that there is little difference in teaching evaluations between the class that used journal writing and the class that did not. Only five of the twenty-four items were significantly different between groups.

This research represents efforts to introduce the pedagogy to the personal selling course and to evaluate its effect on student evaluations of the personal selling course. Although journal writing has been used by educators as an effective teaching/learning technique in other disciplines, much work remains to be done in terms of improving its use and empirically testing its effectiveness in the personal selling course.