



Ana Babic Rosario, PhD

The Assessment Feedback Loop: Adapting Curriculum Based on Grades and Student Evaluations

The Challenge

Introduction to Marketing (MKTG 2800) is taken by 700 students every year. It is a challenging, hands-on course that develops a student's ability to use information from the external environment to determine market feasibility for a real product.

After carefully assessing 30 student reports in Winter and Spring 2017, I have observed that students typically cannot assess and/or retrieve relevant costs of proposed marketing actions. For instance, they generally omit or underestimate the cost of online community management (e.g., wage of social media managers) and struggle with finding secondary information about companies' marketing expenditures.

The Approach

What Is in The Works:

- In Winter 2018, I was awarded the Moreland Information Literacy Grant for offering resources and developing an in-class exercise with a librarian, Ms. Esther Gil. The resources on media space and time, advertising production costs, and access to specialized databases with information about historical marketing expenditures will be included in the course's Library Research Guide. The students will work in teams to estimate costs for a marketing plan redevelopment for their chosen brands.
- A guest speaker from a local marketing agency is scheduled to visit MKTG 2800 students to talk about marketing budgeting and promotion.
- Several guests will attend student presentations and offer comments regarding marketing budgeting and feasibility.

Assessment:

- First, points (e.g., 5/500) will be awarded to students upon completing the in-class workshop with the reference librarian and uploading the completed worksheet on Canvas.
- Second, part of the team project assessment (e.g., 5/50 points) will pertain to the completeness and correctness of information pertaining to marketing costs and budgeting.
- Finally, several questions on marketing budgeting, cost estimation, and feasibility will be added to the final exam.

How it Went

I will implement the changes in the coming weeks, i.e. second half of the Winter 2018 quarter.

So far, I have observed that increasing literacy on this topic (marketing budgeting and feasibility) is challenging, as relevant and accurate information are not publicly accessible, even through a library subscription. One of the reasons for this is that the publicly retrievable prices of media space and time, as well as advertising production costs, can in fact be heavily discounted by marketing agencies. This poses challenges for feasibility assessments that will hold beyond a classroom setting.

The goals of the exercise and curation of available resources on the topic are to:

- increase MKTG 2800 students' literacy on the topic of marketing budgeting and relevant costs, so they may be able to expand their thinking when proposing changes to a company's marketing program (i.e., product, place, price, promotion);
- advance discussion from “increasing product quality while decreasing price” (not feasible) to more feasible business options;
- from an AACSB Assessment of Learning perspective, this effort is relevant for continuous improvement, and it aims to close the “feedback loop”.

Advice for Others

At this stage, before I have implemented the desired changes, I advise the following to the DU community:

- mine the content of student evaluations and course reflections to identify tangible opportunities for improvement as soon as the next quarter;
- consider applying for a Moreland Information Literacy Grant to receive support for developing a similar exercise for your own class;
- collaborate with DU library liaisons (e.g., Ms. Esther Gil)—the wealth of information we have access to is tremendous, and increasing our students' literacy through active usage of secondary sources makes them more competitive on the job market;
- involve industry partners that may be able to fill the information gap, i.e. offer more insights than faculty are able to access through academic sources and library subscriptions to databases.



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