

Original Paper

Towards the Systematic Development of Marketing Students' Creativity

Jack A. Lesser^{1*} & Denise E. Williams²

¹ Department of Marketing, Supply Chain and International Business, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, MN, USA

² Department of Entrepreneurship, and Human Resource Management, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, MN, USA

* Jack A. Lesser, Department of Marketing, Supply Chain and International Business, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, MN, USA

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Abstract

Many university marketing students feel uncomfortable about developing creative thinking skills during college. However, they will soon graduate and face a need to utilize their creative abilities and contribute to their organizations. Therefore, this article provides a wide range of strategies to develop students' creative abilities in marketing classes. It uses Gagné's classical Nine Instructional Events (i.e., Gagné et al., 2005) to develop the strategies because Gagné systematically and comprehensively examines how to develop effective instructional stages across the entire learning process. The article also focuses on developing specific strategies to help students build creative competencies for very different teaching modes, such as asynchronous and synchronous online, HyFlex, and conventional face-to-face classes. By developing strategies for different modes, the instructor will be able to have comparative insight into how to adjust marketing courses to maximally stimulate students' creativity, regardless of the type of course.

Keywords

creativity, teaching pedagogy, instructional effectiveness, teaching modes, marketing instruction

1. Introduction

University business students need to learn how to develop creative thinking skills. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) identifies key competencies for effective career readiness, that require creative thinking skills, including effective problem-solving, managing rapidly changing technology, and navigating diverse perspectives and divergent thinking in the workplace and society (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021). Indeed, the twenty-first-century business environment has faced unprecedented changes including a global pandemic, a diverse and inclusive workforce, and challenges with innovations that use artificial intelligence, strategies for sustainability, drones, free electronic auto charging facilities, and smartphone electrocardiogram sensors, to name a few, which demand new competencies in creativity and innovative thinking from their future leaders, today's students.

These university business students, and future executives and workforce, also need to have a degree of comfort and self-efficacy in examining issues, such as the ones above, that are uncertain, ambiguous, and complex. University students often feel uncomfortable making decisions that do not have "right or wrong" answers. For example, as Aylesworth and Cleary (2020) argue, everyone is born to be creative, but students have increasing social pressures at home, school, and in the community, that often cultivate more transactional behaviors and coping skills required to navigate through their lives; thus, resulting in lower interest in creativity by the time they enter college. Aylesworth and Cleary (2020, p. 249) explain that college students learn to develop a "fear of failure", and they avoid taking risks that may lead to failure. With a focus on performance, some students believe that they need to have a "3.00" GPA; and, they do not want to be involved in classroom activities that lead to barriers or potential failure in securing high grades. Aylesworth and Cleary (2020, p. 249) also explain that many students do not want classroom experiences that have much tolerance for ambiguity (i.e., they want to avoid classroom experiences with outcomes that are uncertain and unpredictable). It is often simpler and quicker to solve problems that are straightforward. For example, many students take multiple choice exams in early courses, and they do not have practice with experiences that involve ambiguity.

The development of creativity and innovation competencies in the classroom empowers and strengthens students' decision-making capacity, necessary for mitigating ambiguity and uncertainty. Krishen (2021) provides an illustration of running ultramarathon races (races that are over 26.2 miles long) which, as she explains, is why it is also important to teach about ambiguity in business courses. According to Krishen (2021), a marathon runner who is "fixated" on reasons why s/he cannot finish a hundred-mile race will not finish it. Similar to Carol Dweck's (2006) work on the growth mindset, Krishen (2021) emphasizes the need for business leaders to develop their growth perspective of achieving a "hundred-mile" race challenge that stretches their firms to win their races. This requires a mindset and belief that they can manage changes, reframe failure, and positively triumph, despite

potential uncertainty and difficulty. Business students, too, have the opportunity to be empowered by learning how to develop creative solutions and not be limited by a fixed mindset about ambiguity.

In other words, business leaders and business students can have, as Dweck (2006) argues, a fixed or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset suggests that a person cannot improve in abilities over time, and a growth mindset indicates that a person can learn to make changes in abilities to master his or her environment (Dweck, 2006). A business student can and will find value in learning to have a growth mindset in courses and show perseverance to make creative business changes that master the environment. Therefore, this article will present a variety of suggestions to help students develop a creative “growth mindset” in introductory marketing courses. Most of the suggestions apply to other business disciplines as well. However, the authors of this article have experience in marketing and entrepreneurship, and they apply these best practices to these disciplines.

Some attention has been given to examining creativity in marketing courses. As discussed earlier, Aylesworth and Cleary (2020) conducted research on creativity in marketing. Other investigators have also examined creativity in marketing courses, such as Azinheira et al. (2022), Green (2019), McCorkle et al. (2007), Ramocki (2014), and Win (2014). Several problems exist with these areas of research, though, that lead to the contributions of this article. Except for Ramocki (2014), the investigators have not tended to provide specific strategies about how to develop creativity in marketing courses. Furthermore, they have viewed creativity as a very general consideration that applies to every aspect of a marketing course. Investigators have generally not provided any form of a systematic approach to improve a creative mindset, across the different stages of instructional development of a course. Furthermore, investigators have addressed creativity as though it applies in the same manner in all forms of marketing courses. Yet, different types of teaching modes exist (such as asynchronous online, synchronous online, and conventional on-campus classes). Instructors can benefit from learning how they can develop students’ creative mindsets when teaching different types of courses. Therefore, this article provides rather detailed strategies about how to develop students’ creativity across different stages involved in instructional development. It also considers how to develop a creative mindset for different modes of marketing that instructors teach.

To develop strategies that enhance students’ creativity across different stages of instruction, this article adopts Gagné’s classical nine instructional events (e.g., Gagné et al., 2005). Gagné’s events are used as the article’s theoretical foundation to explain how to stimulate students to develop a creative “growth mindset” in a course. Gagné’s instructional events are extremely influential and widely used across disciplines for developing effective courses and instructional designs (Dempsey, 2002; Dick, 2003; White, 2002). Therefore, Gagné’s events provide a particularly strong theoretical basis for developing ideas that can apply to different types of faculty when developing courses that seek to engage creativity thinking competency development.

This article begins by explaining Gagné's (e.g., Gagné et al., 2005) nine instructional events. It will then discuss some primary general considerations about how marketing students can develop a creative mindset for each of the stages in the model. Finally, the article will propose specific teaching strategies for marketing that move students through Gagné's different events. Different modalities of marketing courses are often offered, such as on-campus, online asynchronous, online synchronous, and HyFlex (instruction that is both online and on-campus); and, different suggestions will focus on these forms of course instruction. By including each of these types of teaching modalities, the article provides strong comparative insights about how to develop teaching strategies that keep students creatively immersed in their marketing classes.

1.1 Gagné's Nine Instructional Events

Robert Gagné's Nine Instructional Events (i.e., Gagné et al., 2005) have been applied to almost every area concerned with improving individuals' learning. The models have been used to train health professionals in patient treatment (Basir et al., 2021; Wong, 2018), to teach the physical sciences (Çalışkan, 2014; House, 2002; Smaldino & Thompson, 1990), and to instruct students in creative disciplines (Baba et al., 2017; Ludin et al., 2018; Hamizi et al., 2022). Gagné's Instructional Events have been as widely used as any teaching model to develop effective courses and instruction (Fields, 1996; Martin et al., 2007; Reiser, 2002). These intuitively appealing events are simultaneously systematic "stages of instruction" that can be used to teach students. They are shown in Figure 1 below, as adapted from Gagné, Briggs, and Wagner (1992).

- 1) **Gaining attention**—capture the students' attention.
- 2) **Informing learners of the objectives**—inform students of the objectives so that they understand what they will learn.
- 3) **Stimulating recall of prerequisite learning**—help students make sense of new Knowledge by showing how it relates to previous experiences
- 4) **Presenting the stimulus material**—present the material in a meaningful way, breaking the content into chunks and providing helpful examples.
- 5) **Providing learning guidance**—offer guidance, suggestions, and help to students so that they learn the material.
- 6) **Eliciting the performance**—provide practice to learn the material.
- 7) **Providing feedback about performance**—have feedback so that students can improve.
- 8) **Assessing the performance**—test students to determine whether they have met learning objectives.
- 9) **Enhancing retention and transfer**—help the learner transfer knowledge to later "real world" experiences.

Figure 1. Events of Instruction

Gagné, Briggs, and Wagner's (1992) events not only have been widely used in education since the 1960s, but they are also intuitively simple to understand and apply. Following Figure 1, initially, the instructor should gain the attention of students. For example, when teaching the first class of a course, the instructor needs to get students to focus on what s/he is about to say. Then, the instructor should inform learners about the material's objectives. By doing this, the instructor keeps students "on target" and enables them to appreciate why different areas of coverage are relevant. If the instructor wants students to learn how to develop an effective advertisement and states this objective, students can understand why different areas of discussion connect to developing an effective advertisement.

The instructor proactively takes a step further and stimulates the recall of prerequisite learning. Often, the best way for students to appreciate a topic is for them to recall and appreciate how it relates to an area that has already been relevant. At this point, the instructor should present the material. However, the instructor is "more" than a presenter of material. S/he also attempts to provide active guidance so that students understand the material being covered. Once the instructor covers the material and actively guides students to understand it, the instructor elicits performance or has students practice and apply the new knowledge. At this point, the instructor provides feedback that explains how the student can improve. The instructor also takes steps to assess students' performance and evaluate how well they comprehend and apply the material. Finally, the instructor helps students appreciate how the material applies to their broader lives and career choices.

1.2 Systematic Development of Students' Creativity through Gagné's Events

Below, different strategies are discussed that the instructor may use to develop students' interest in creatively examining marketing issues when the course begins, throughout the course, and years later, when the course is only a memory but applied in their lived experiences. The article uses Gagné's events to develop a systematic framework for developing students through stages. When discussing each of the events, some overview considerations are initially examined to ensure the success of the event. Then, a few strategies are suggested for these different events when teaching different course modalities. For simplicity, the only types of courses considered below are online asynchronous (online courses that do not require that students go to classes at a regular time), online synchronous (online courses that require that students meet online with the instructor at regularly held times), HyFlex (courses offering students the choice of participating in person or online), and conventional on campus (classes that have meetings on campus at regular times).

2. Event One: Gaining Attention—Some General Considerations for Its Success

Gagné's (i.e., Gagné et al., 2005) first stage of instructional design involves "getting attention". A primary theme about how a marketing course can "get attention", and also inspire students to develop a creative mindset, can be understood through Kelman's (i.e., 1958; 1974) classical social influence theory. Kelman's (1958) social influence stages offer progressive levels of engagement, beginning with compliance, then identification, and finally, internalization. Social influence initially begins by having individuals "comply" with, or adhere to, a request. In compliance, individuals do not have an internal desire to be involved. Later, after individuals "comply" with a request, they may "identify" with the appeal of the message. Later yet, they may "internalize", or accept, the message as though it stems from personal values (Kelman, 1958, p. 53).

A basic type of compliance is, "getting attention". Students may comply with an instructor by paying attention to an introductory email about the course. What causes compliance that leads to identification, or even internalization, from the emails, or in any other manner? It is central that the student, when complying, also begins to identify with the message's "personal relevance" (Kelman, 1958; Kelman, 1974). The instructor should initially get the student to pay attention to a message, and simultaneously, identify with it. For example, a marketing instructor wants students to have a creative mindset. Therefore, the instructor should get attention in a manner that enables the student to identify with the relevance of having a creative mindset during the course.

In the next section, a few strategies for focusing attention on assignments are considered that also simultaneously assist students to identify with, and later even internalize, a desire to be creative. As a brief illustration: an introductory course letter might be used to obtain initial student attention to the course. Many instructors write an introductory email letter at the beginning of the course. An abbreviated copy of such a letter is shown in Appendix 1. The letter generates attention through humor, and it has the broader goal of building a positive attitude about the course's creativity.

One added consideration is also important when developing attention in marketing courses: generally, students are the same people who take conventional and online classes. Treat asynchronous online students (those who do not formally meet for classes) in as similar of a personalized way as on-campus and synchronous online students (those who meet formally online for classes) as possible. Three "key rules" to be effective when getting initial course attention and in all of the learning stages, are: be personalized, be more personalized, and be more personalized, yet. Emphasize the same personalized teaching approaches to the extent humanly possible, whether online or offline. Given the challenge of self-motivation and self-monitoring required by online courses, it is important for the instructor to creatively think of the "equivalent" level of engagement in the online modality as in conventional classes. Motivate online students through approaches that focus on personalization and building relationships.

2.1 Event One: Generating Attention—A Few Strategies for Different Teaching Modalities

Table 1. Strategies to Generate Attention

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|---|---|---|--|
| Introduce course: have “Owner’s Manual” email. | Reinforce accountability: | Engage: ensure outreach to online audience. | Provide evidence: invite previously successful students to be guests so they can explain the importance of a creative mindset was important to them. |
| Offer emotional/relationship-building: through introductory video that explains importance of creativity. | Insist that students are at first class and require that they have their video on during Zoom meetings. | | |
| Post first discussion board assignment: that explains the relevance of creativity. | Presence: require that videos are active when in Zoom classes. | | |
| Socialize: develop ways for student inter-engagement outside of class, such as through an “online café” (Bonk & Khoo, 2014, p. 62). | Advertise: the course, and its emphasis on creativity. to students before they take it. | | |

Only a few illustrations are provided in Table 1 about getting attention. Some can be used for more than one teaching mode. Most of the ideas in this article are ones that have been applied in courses in a minority-serving Midwest university where innovation is encouraged. The book, *TEC-Variety: 100+ Activities for Motivating and Retaining Learners Online*, by Curtis Bonk and Elaine Khoo (2014), is a useful reference for ideas that may help supplement these ideas. Some of the TEC-Variety suggestions are directly used in this article.

The Course Introduction “Owner’s Manual” introductory email for asynchronous online courses focuses on generating attention to early assignments and establishing an interest in being creative. It was discussed in the previous section, and an abbreviated illustration of the letter is in Appendix I. It uses humor, and inspirational quotes, designed to make it different than other introduction emails sent to students. It also attempts to extend beyond getting attention to relationship and self-efficacy building. The letter is concerned with ensuring that the student has a strong “support system” of help from the

instructor. This introductory email can be recorded by the instructor as a Zoom message and uploaded into the course.

Another asynchronous online strategy involves providing a creative online video that goes over the course and explains why the course's creativity will help students understand concepts needed later in their lives. For example, an instructor might develop a video of a hypothetical, humorous coffee shop for pet owners, and their pets. It might explain the different stages of the course (determine the target market, develop the marketing mix, etc.) to reinforce why creativity will help them make decisions about the coffee shop and other areas of business that they will likely face in the future. A third asynchronous online strategy involves having an online café where students can casually meet with others (also discussed by Bonk and Khoo, 2014, p. 62). Asynchronous students may not have on-campus "friends", and an online café may help them to develop social support so that they more richly enjoy the course. Encouraging a short reflection paper for points generated after the experience documents engagement and invites the student to consider the relevance of the course content.

The synchronous online course suggestions reinforce the importance of student involvement in Zoom classes. For example, students are strongly required to be in attendance during the first class. Attendance in each other live online class is mandated. This creates the opportunity for stackable learning experiences from one meeting to the next, utilizing small group breakouts for discussion and group ideation exercises. In addition, students are asked to have their video cameras on during Zoom classes and show verbal involvement in the course discussions. Course points issued for these requests help to generate compliance.

One other synchronous consideration: "advertise" the course to those who will take the course later. "Promote" the course and its fun through attractive graphics design, use of prior student testimonials, and even statements from corporate leaders about the value of creativity competency development in their organizations. By sharing information within the university's social media and other classes, students will take the class with the realization that creativity is a necessary part of marketing.

For HyFlex courses, the authors advocate that those who do not attend the on-campus meeting be given strong personalized attention. It is easy for online students to lose interest, with attention given to members of those who attend the class. Focused involvement should be given to them. Consider creating online teams in small groups for exercise engagement while the in-person students are participating in live experiential learning. Finally, for a conventional class, it is important to take advantage of the natural strengths of meeting in person. Consider, for example, inviting students who took the course during earlier semesters to share their experiences, explain how the marketing course's creativity was helpful to them, and ask them to lead a discussion with current students about how creativity in a marketing course will be necessary for years after the course is over. Additionally, consider including guest speakers, such as alumni or community leaders with marketing responsibility,

in the course to increase student engagement, provide practical application of key course concepts, and be potential mentors.

3. Event Two: Informing Listeners of Objectives—Some General Considerations for Its Success

Most courses and course text chapters have formal objectives. These objectives serve as a “roadmap” and can be designed to assist students in experiencing an inspirational learning journey. However, the discussion of teaching objectives can be the least memorable part of a class. While objectives are often not internalized well by students, instructors can utilize methods such as short quizzes at the start of the semester on facts from the syllabus to encourage attention. Additionally, the instructor can “show” and not just “tell” students about why objectives are relevant by using interesting illustrations. Furthermore, instructors are encouraged to be creative, themselves, and come up with alternative, engaging, and “fun” ways to generate student engagement in the objectives.

3.1 Event Two: Informing Listeners of Objectives—A Few Strategies for Different Teaching Modalities

Table 2. Inform Listeners of Objectives

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|--|--|---|
| Reframe the quiz: incorporate a short, fun quiz over the syllabus. | Inspire: adopt the conventional class strategy here. Utilize small group breakouts for idea-generation sessions. Encourage students to develop a journal that allows them to review “lived experiences” during the week. | SMART goals: invite students to create specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely goals for the course with a personal commitment to achieve them (Bonk & Khoo, 2014, p. 55). Consider using a self or team contract to create accountability. | Inspire: write class objectives in a way that answers the question “Why take this course?”. Personalize: ask students to explain how the objectives are relevant to their “lived experiences”. |

For asynchronous classes, consider having students take a small, perhaps even humorous, quiz over the syllabus. Then, students will be able to develop an initial basis to appreciate the course goals when they are unfolded. The strategy for HyFlex classes, about asking students to make personal commitments, can be applied to any of the teaching modes. This strategy is suggested in *TEC Variety* by Bonk and Khoo (2014, p. 55), and it can be powerful. In it, students make personal commitments that they wish to undertake that are based on different course objectives. For example, a student may wish to develop a stronger personal expertise in store design based on a course objective about store design. S/he could

explain the desire to develop expertise in the area and discuss why it is an interesting career possibility. “Personal commitments” force students to reflect on what they want to have as personal course outcomes and how they will attempt to develop personal relevance from these outcomes. The instructor may use discussion boards so that others in the class can observe and reflect on the student’s anticipated commitments; thus, creating a community of accountability.

Finally, a conventional class can build on its natural interactivity. The instructor can have students prepare before the first class about the relevance of the first-class objectives. For any mode, consider working with the students to create SMART goals for themselves throughout the semester related to the course. Students may also “journal” how they think that the different objectives will be relevant to them across their lives and explain their beliefs in the class. Reflection journals are excellent tools to encourage students to use throughout the semester to track their ideas, thoughts, and outcomes.

4. Event Three: Stimulating Recall of Prerequisite Learning—Some General Considerations for Success

Anything that can be done to stimulate students’ earlier positive experiences will make them more motivated. By trying to recall earlier experiences of success or reframing initially disappointing events to lessons learned, students are starting to integrate their earlier understanding of how to be successful in life with new information from the course (i.e., Gagné 1980; Gagné 1988). They are attempting to develop wisdom about how to be successful (i.e., Smartwood, 2013), and the instructor serves as a key catalyst to “stoke” their internal fires by helping them to connect previous experiences with course material.

Indeed, one of the most prolific scholars about “wisdom”, Robert Sternberg, discussed how to be wise in a manner that strongly pertains to stimulating students to recall experiences in classes. He explained, “Wisdom is not just a way of thinking about things; it is a way of doing things. If people wish to be wise, they have to act wisely, not just think wisely (Sternberg, 2003, p. 188)”. Applied to teaching, the instructor may invite students to apply earlier experiences that relate to the course because making the connection of life, to learning, generates an internal wisdom about how the course material is relevant.

4.1 Event Three: Stimulating Recall of Prerequisite Learning—A Few Strategies for Different Modes

Table 3. Stimulate Recall of Prerequisite Learning

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|--|--|---|
| Enjoy: develop a fun “Owner’s Manual” for students to answer in discussion boards since there are no formal classes. | Engage: use small group breakouts to discuss and document learning from the “Owner’s Manual” for course project. | Competition: create team building exercises where On-campus/off-campus have friendly competition over the “Owner’s Manual”; offer prizes for incentives such as points or popular, easy-to-read books/audio tapes on creativity. | Experience: involve students using “Owner’s Manual” with game during class. |

Again, learning is heavily concerned with connecting previous knowledge to future knowledge. Often, students in marketing courses develop comprehensive marketing plans with numerous different stages. Other business courses are similar and require that students develop comprehensive plans that have numerous stages, too. The “Owner’s Manual” listed for synchronous courses is an approach that has proven to be successful in supporting students’ understanding of such complex processes, which are often semester-long and become the focus of a course. As an illustration, the instructor might prepare a humorous “Owner’s Manual” (or overall set of instructions for a complex project). Years ago, one author of this article had students learn relatively complex marketing research processes for a detailed marketing research course. The students needed to deeply understand these complex stages because they were about to conduct “live projects” for real organizations. An instructor might use the same steps below for any complex business project.

First, the students read a humorous “owner’s manual” or a set of instructions for each of the different stages. Then, the students were asked to pretend that they fell asleep after a long day. In “their sleep”, students imagined that they met Sam Walton of Walmart. They pretended to follow the different (complex) stages of marketing research covered in the project owner’s manual. Furthermore, in “their pretend sleep”, they tried to explain, in a written document, to Sam Walton how to improve Walmart’s strategies through the different steps discussed in the Owner’s Manual. Of course, they did not meet Sam Walton; they pretended that they met him. By meeting with “Sam Walton” about a highly familiar firm, they easily applied existing knowledge. By using humor, fantasy, and projection about someone else (a “pretend” Sam Walton), they explained how they applied quite complex research stages in a fun

manner. Finally, students met online with the Professor/ (alias, “Sam Walton”) and verbally went over the different stages.

The other illustrations in Table 4 are similar, and they may be used interchangeably for different teaching modes. For example, for conventional classes, the same approach as above may be used. However, the instructor may make a “game” during class about the class questions over different stages. For example, the instructor might select a student to be the class “coach”. When students answer questions correctly about the stages of the plan, the instructor might yell “stellar” loudly, and the coach would enter on an Excel spreadsheet the “stellar” received by each student. The “stellar” count may then represent a certain number of added m/c questions that each student would later get correct on the next quiz. For HyFlex courses, instead, the instructor may have those who are in the class compete with those at home. Using Zoom, students can collaborate as teams in an attempt to answer questions. For asynchronous, or more simplified projects, students might answer owner manual questions in a discussion board.

5. Event Four: Presenting the Stimulus Material—Some General Considerations for Success

The single most important “present the content” consideration may be from Alice Isen’s well-known research about problem-solving. She and her investigators (i.e., Isen, Daubman & Nowicki, 1987) had students attempt to solve difficult problems. She found that they were much more able to solve the problems when they were given “candy”. When students were given candy, they had fun coming up with solutions. Isen and others (i.e., Isen, Daubman & Nowicki, 1987; Isen, 1999) often examined the roles of using positive emotions and fun to stimulate individuals to come up with complex solutions. When presenting material, create a learning environment that works as a catalyst for positive and uplifting engagement with their peers. This “positive affect” allows students to use their mental resources more deeply. By providing students with experiences that generate a state of “fun” or happiness, they can reduce inhibited beliefs and handle difficult forms of learning and analysis experiences more effectively. The literature on happiness finds a correlation with productivity, achievement, and proclivity toward motivation (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Diener et al., 1999).

Even more broadly, it is important for students to feel “intrinsically motivated” (or want to be involved) in their learning. Intrinsic motivation is concerned with being involved for its own sake because the individual innately wants to master his or her own destiny (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Encouraging students to have a desire for deeper involvement is core to intrinsically motivated learning. Intrinsic motivation is broader than “enjoyment” because it is concerned with “why” students enjoy (to master the environment).

Applied to marketing courses: marketing tends to be an “open environment” field that has no “right or wrong” answers. An “intrinsic motivation” (getting students excited for its own sake) teaching philosophy is particularly important in marketing and other “open environment” courses. It is key to excite marketing students for its own sake, as opposed to trying to find “right or wrong” answers.

How to “present the content”, that stresses “intrinsic motivation” in an open-environment area, such as marketing? As background about how to do this, consider a research study conducted by one of the authors of this article (Lesser, 2001). The author examined a wide range of different types of motives of individuals. Part of the study focused on the following different considerations of intrinsic motivation: pure enjoyment, perceived competence, self-determination, curiosity, self-determination, curiosity, and a sense of challenge. The research found that none of these dimensions could be statistically separated. For example, a desire for perceived competence was statically inseparable from having a desire for challenge, or from a desire for pure enjoyment. Applied to presenting content in courses: use all of the different intrinsic motivation dimensions when presenting course content. They build on each other. Make courses “fun”. Have emails that show humor. The marketing instructor is attempting to make a student feel more challenged by using a sense of humor. Reach each student individually, as much as possible, and show a sense of self-determination. The student will find the material to have personal relevance. Make comments in discussion boards, and through assignments that “build up a student’s perceived competence”. Change teaching approaches and always make students feel a sense of challenge. Liberally use each of these different forms of intrinsic motivation together.

5.1 Event Four: Presenting the Stimulus Material—A Few Strategies for Different Teaching Modes

Table 4. Present Stimulus Material

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|---|---|---|
| Use humor: prepare humorous, inspirational videos of material each week. | Pop quiz: Prepare a humorous “pop quiz” over material that students need to answer before first class. Give humorous gifts to | Game: Make a game out of having online students compete with those who come to classes. | Party: Same “pop quiz” as for synchronous students but focuses even more on having a special class party. |
| Reflect: provide students with earlier papers. Ask previous students who wrote them to prepare advice. | praise students when they answer questions. | | |

When presenting stimulus materials during teaching, it is important to use all of the different dimensions of intrinsic motivation. Encourage students to enjoy the material, be curious and challenged, feel more competent, and have a sense of self-determination. The different strategies presented across the modalities are most effective when the instructor attempts to use all of these intrinsic motivation dimensions together. Some strategies in the table involve a humorous “pop quiz”. It is no “pop quiz”, but merely a fun chance for students to review areas with the instructor with the title, “pop quiz”. By telling students in advance that they have a “hoax” pop quiz for the next class, they paradoxically find the experience to be fun and unthreatening. The humorous “pop quiz” should use each of the different types of intrinsic motivation. The instructor might give students a pop quiz, couched with obvious humor and perhaps written in Jokerman font at the end of a class, to summarize the material. Students are asked to answer the questions at the beginning of the next class. The instructor can build on the suspense of the “fun quiz” by having joke emails between the two classes about different possible answers. During the class period, the instructor may give small “gag gifts” and other minor awards to students. The instructor should attempt to “build up” students who get questions correct, as well as those who do not, to support their perceived competence. For example, the instructor might yell, “Stellar”, after a student gets a “pop quiz” question correct in class. When a student misses or fails to answer, the instructor might ask him or her to try (again) and yell, “stellar” when the student indeed tries. Another student might record the number of “stellars” that students receive, and the instructor would use the “stellar count” to award students with gag gifts and, possibly, add “questions correct” on the next quiz (Realize that some instructors are more comfortable than others, about providing humor. In addition, some diverse faculty may be very concerned about establishing credibility in the classroom. They may have a very concrete concern about how humor can reduce their effectiveness if they are not careful).

6. Event Five: Providing Learning Guidance—Some General Considerations for Success

“Presenting content” and “providing learning guidance” are interrelated, “flip sides” of the same educational process. “Providing learning guidance” is heavily concerned with being a 24 x 7 personalized support system to develop strong student engagement with the content. It often means to provide a sense of student intrinsic motivation and make students feel excited and challenged, outside of the formal class. In marketing courses, having learning guidance also partially means helping students develop an increased tolerance for ambiguity about the relatively abstract and open-environment areas that are part of marketing courses. How does an instructor develop a “24 x 7” student support system to feel excited about courses that require a relatively high tolerance for ambiguity?

In part, think of ways to make tolerance for ambiguity a positive course attribute. In marketing and other “open environment” courses that require a tolerance for ambiguity, students need to have a creative mindset and self-efficacy in their ability to find solutions. There is no simple solution about how to make students develop an open-minded creative mindset when analyzing ambiguous situations. However, developing students’ tolerance for ambiguity appears to be critical so that they effectively manage the turbulent environments of the future.

Furthermore, the instructor ought to explain why it is important to have a tolerance for ambiguity. Indeed, an instructor might build on the Baden and Higgs (2015) explanation of wisdom as knowing “what we do not know”. Specifically, they (Baden & Higgs, 2015) argue that “it is wiser to pursue incomplete, messy, contextualized, uncertain knowledge that enriches our understanding of how to promote human welfare than to amass lots of clean data that is easy to manipulate and present, but yet is based on false assumptions” (p. 541). The instructor needs to explain to students that the development of skills that will enable them to manage ambiguity, is key to providing lasting solutions and having career success

In addition, the instructor ought to be very positive about how easy—and “fun”—it is for students to become proficient at developing a creative mindset. The instructor can integrate each of the different intrinsic motivation dimensions when thinking of creative ways to help students expand creative ideas, both inside and outside of actual classes. For example, outside of formal classes, the instructor can help students attempt to “self-determine” how concepts relate to their own lived experiences and later lives. During actual classes, the instructor might call on students in a personalized manner, such as by using their initials or nicknames, being very careful to ensure correct pronunciations, particularly given the variety of indigenous pronunciations. Even when emailing students, perhaps the instructor should continue using their initials or nicknames. More importantly, the instructor ought to think of ways to have positive reinforcement unexpectedly. For example, when one student in a team of members makes a nice contribution, write a team email about the thought that was shown. Make an ongoing, out-of-class effort to build up students through the interrelated dimensions of enjoyment, perceived competence, curiosity, challenge, and self-determination.

6.1 Event Five: Providing Learning Guidance—A Few Strategies for Different Modes

Table 5. Provide Learning Guidance

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|--|--|---|
| Be accessible: provide a humorous “Help Button” on course website. Have Zoom meetings to work with small groups of students. | Justify creativity: early in the course, explain the relevance of having a tolerance for ambiguity in life. Give unexpected help: identify areas early that may be difficult for students. Provide numerous illustrations to help them. Prepare work that students do not expect from the instructor. | Support students: encourage students to get help from the instructor and others. Some students may be able to meet each other over coffee. | Support students through others: develop ongoing help from the faculty, and previous students, about how to deal with ambiguous issues. Have a course “Board of Directors” consisting of earlier students who did well. They hold brief “office hours” with current students. |

The instructor is a coach, and s/he involves their creative mindsets to generate stimulating, engaging, and creative ways to help students help themselves. An “asynchronous online” strategy involves having a “Help Button” in different parts of the student’s course web pages. Use it to offer ways to get personal help. Several added illustrations are provided for learning guidance in Table 5. Indeed, have a “Board of Directors” of previous students or alumni who work with the instructor to assist students. They could meet with students one hour per week, in the instructor’s office or online, and be given titles for their help.

7. Event Six: Eliciting Performance—Some General Considerations for Success

Eliciting performance, or inviting students to practice what they have learned, is an important way for students to develop a lasting ability to develop strategies for an uncertain environment. The best way to get students to practice is to be proactive. Write to students early and ask if they may help with assignments. Be “kind but firm” when getting students to practice. Be extremely positive and concerned in emails, and in every possible interaction. Think of ways to help students, even before they start working on the assignments, too. Nevertheless, be firm about requesting that everyone practices and completes assignments.

Stress that students initially take small steps to practice course concepts. Write, and talk with, students early about helping them and show a sense of humor (For example, possibly write, “Do it today because Halloween is not far away”). Be extremely positive when students are late on early assignments, but request compliance about completing “small steps”/assignments over time.

7.1 Event Six: Eliciting Performance—A Few Strategies for Different Modes

Table 6. Elicit Performance

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | Hyflex | Conventional |
|--|---|--|--|
| Have role models: in TEC Book, Poster Sessions, and Gallery Tours, “online café” from Bonk & Khoo (2014, pp. 275-276): request that students from earlier semesters make assignments available for current students. This “Poster Gallery Tour” can be kept permanently. | Develop party: same as for Event 4, Synchronous Online. Prepare “fun” assignment answered as a “fun party” during Zoom class. | Use Peer coaching: Adapted from TEC Book, Select a Critical Friend, from Bonk & Khoo (2014, pp. 275-276): select a “friend” in class, or at home, who can critically evaluate the work of another. | Proofing helps learning: in TEC Book, Grammar Check, Peer Check, Bonk & Khoo (2014, pp. 272-273). Have students edit drafts of other students. This editorial process helps students understand the entire logic of an assignment. |

Two areas to elicit performance, in Table 7, are simple to appreciate, and practical. First, as discussed for the Hyflex mode, have students select a “friend” in the class who can critically evaluate the member’s work. Anyone can feel “stuck” when developing assignments, particularly when preparing creative work. It can be invaluable to find a “friend” who helps out. The other strategy, for conventional classes, is also invaluable. Ask members to “proof” drafts of work from others. “Proofing” is extremely educational; a student who proofs considers how to develop the overall flow of the work, and understands the logic involved in applying concepts.

8. Events Seven and Eight: Providing Feedback about Performance and Assessing the Performance—Some General Considerations for Success

Gagné (i.e., Gagné et al., 2005) consider Event Seven, providing feedback, to be about formative feedback so that students can improve. Event Eight, assessing feedback, is about the student's final assessment of learning. This section gives the most attention to Event Seven or providing formative feedback.

When developing formative feedback, it is important to give timely feedback so that the student can learn from it and improve later work. Develop a “progressive strategy” that gives students a chance to become better and better at developing their work. This is particularly important for courses that center on creative and abstract concepts, such as marketing courses. Attempt to have multiple different overlapping assignments that interactively build into each other. Some early assignments can be handled in discussion boards and be worth little. Others can be worth more but are still viewed to be practice for final papers. Ideally, students should develop final papers that have gone through earlier stages of practice and development. Team projects, too, can be evaluated several times during the semester, with the first one having only a minimal grade.

Another consideration about feedback: how “kind” should evaluative comments be, and how detailed? For example, an instructor of this article initially tends to write “kind comments” in his evaluations. Then, he considers different specific sections of student papers and discusses specific areas that need improvement. Most of the time, students appreciate the “up-front” kind, detailed comments. However, be aware that some students from structured fields tend to dislike kindness—and detailed suggestions. Many of them are from disciplines in which answers tend to be more “right or wrong”. The goal needs to be focused on encouragement but also continuous improvement and authentic feedback on the areas of development.

Pintrich and Schunk (1996) argue that, when encouraging learners with praise, to be direct and unambiguous and tie comments to positive learning outcomes. Brophy (2010) also suggests, “When praise is bland and uniformly presented, and given without regard to performance, it tends to be ineffective (p. 262)”. The best approach is to write a polished draft of comments to students. Write believable comments of praise that show thought and effort. Explain specific ways that the student should improve and how these forms of improvement will help the student in later assignments. When the instructor reads the later work, bring up the areas of improvement and how much they are valued.

8.1 Events Seven and Eight: Providing Feedback about Performance and Assessing the Performance—A Few Strategies for Different Modes

Table 7. Provide Feedback and Assess Performance

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|--|---|--|
| Provide feedback: write a polished “basic” draft of comments that begin with strong praise, to the extent possible, and then provide detailed suggestions for improvement. Make it polished, detailed, and to the point. | Provide feedback, in TEC Book, from Bonk & Khoo (2014, pp. 84-85): Have mentors available through mobile messaging for help. | Provide feedback: embed formative assessment opportunities throughout course website. | Provide feedback: in TEC Book, from Bonk & Khoo (2014, pp. 77-78). Have students reflect on what is working well, and not working well. This gives students a formative chance to give advice. |
| Provide feedback: include online practice reviews and practice tests. | | | Assess performance: revise 20% of each class every semester. Usually impossible to drastically change most courses. |
| Assess performance: administer pre-and post-tests to check for progression of performance. | | | |

In creative courses, such as marketing, students are encouraged to have as much of a chance to practice polishing work, through earlier assignments as possible. Most of the “providing feedback” suggestions, in Table 7 are concerned with being progressive in providing feedback. Students in the class, earlier students, guest executives, and other professors, can be used to assess students’ performance. It can be painful to receive criticism from anyone. Have a healthy amount of humor and authentic kindness when others evaluate students. Encourage students to realize that they are developing feedback skills which will help them when they seek management positions in the future. Think of ways to make their formative evaluations engaging, interactive, and enjoyable, as well as educational.

Furthermore, develop pre-/post-tests to evaluate performance. Often, instructors’ evaluations can help the instructor develop long-term improvement and simultaneously give students a chance to enhance their understanding of concepts during the course. For example, as suggested for hybrid classes in Table 7, the instructor can incorporate numerous different open-ended oral or written questions to give students a chance to reflect on the course and its evaluations.

9. Event Nine: Enhance Retention and Transfer—Some General Considerations for Success

The final step here is to help students remember concepts in a more lasting manner by having them practice the materials in ways that they will use later in life. By giving a liberal amount of attention to “why the student should care”, when going over concepts, the instructor is providing application and “the why” for students that encourages their self-motivation to learn. The instructor has a good “real world” reason for including most areas in a course; the student, at every turn, needs to know the “good reason”.

9.1 Event Nine: Enhance Retention and Transfer—A Few Strategies for Different Modes

Table 8. Enhance Retention and Transfer

| Asynchronous Online | Synchronous Online | HyFlex | Conventional |
|--|--|---|--|
| Reward students: give students awards for course efforts—that they can use in their career searches. | Role play: pretend, at the end of the course, that students select a well-known business pioneer (i.e., Steve Jobs) to discuss their projects. | Diversity value: take advantage of differences in backgrounds of students by asking them to explain how the course, now, allows them to handle issues differently in their lives. | Support from others: Have final student presentations open to faculty, executives, and parents. Guests discuss the contributions of the student’s work in class. |
| Remember course through an email: at the end of the course, ask students to write an email to their email accounts. They should explain two abilities that the course taught them to have that they most want to remember in the future. | Ask them what this person would likely have considered the projects’ contributions. | | |

The illustrations in Table 8 are designed for students to “internalize” the abstract abilities that they have developed in the course and recognize the importance of these abilities later. Consider, for example, the second illustration for asynchronous classes, in Table 8. Near the end of the course, students are asked to send themselves an email to different email accounts and write in the subject area of the email, open in (five years from the date written). In the body of the email, they ought to list two abilities that the course has taught them to develop, and conclude the email with the phrase, “Believe in yourself”. Some students will forget about the email for a couple of years. Yet, most students, several years after

graduation, will find the emails, and realize that they have important creative abilities stimulated partially by the course.

The other illustrations in Table 8 are also concerned with stimulating an appreciation of “later life” abilities developed from the course. For example, as discussed in Table 8 for synchronous courses, students might pretend that a well-known business pioneer was in the final class, such as Steve Jobs. What, according to the students, might the pioneer argue are contributions of the projects? Furthermore, invite relatives, work colleagues, industry leaders, faculty members, and other guests to attend student presentations and discuss the relevance of their presentations for later in the students’ lives.

10. Summary: Towards the Systematic Development of Students’ Creativity

The introduction of this article explained that many students feel uncomfortable about developing creative abilities in their business courses. Some students have a fear of failure and worry that creativity in courses can impact their GPA. Others do not have much tolerance for ambiguity. They have had multiple choice quizzes, and highly structured early courses, and find creative business courses to be intimidating. However, these students’ eventual careers, and lives, depend on developing creative problem-solving abilities.

This article provides some suggestions to develop students’ creative abilities in introductory marketing courses. It uses Gagné’s nine “instructional events” (i.e., Gagné et al., 2005) because the events provide a systematic set of stages to improve any form of instruction. Furthermore, this article attempts to “go beyond” Gagné’s events and offers best practices and new ideas that directly assist students to be more creative. For example, the article is initially concerned about getting students’ attention so that they come to classes and read course materials. However, it also focuses on ways to change the student’s “mindset” for appreciating creativity throughout the course, with humorous “course manual” emails (see Appendix 1), and an online cafe’ so that class members develop a foundation of social support. The article also attempts to inspire students to build on their earlier experiences by requesting that they read a humorous “owner’s manual” of the course, and applying complex concepts by pretending that they were responding to “Sam Walton”. This approach attempts to use humor, fantasy, peer engagement, and projection to get students to relax and use their creativity.

Additionally, the article focuses on engaging students through all of the types of intrinsic motivation. When attempting to “stretch” students by using all dimensions, such as pure enjoyment, curiosity, challenge, improved perceptions of competence, and self-determination, sequentially, the receptivity of the student for creativity is enhanced. Finally, evaluations, and all instructor teaching, are concerned with ensuring that students develop abilities for five or ten years in the future, and not just for today.

The illustrations in this article are limited. Of course, instructors ought to first consider their own teaching styles and develop strategies that best fit their styles, goals, and time considerations. Hopefully, the illustrations will stimulate instructors to expand on these ideas and come up with new,

inspirational strategies that represent their styles and constraints. The illustrations in this article are about “how” and “why” to teach students to be creative. In combination with Gagne’s events, they provide a systematic road map about “what” can be considered to develop creative minds and “when”.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Inspirational Introductory Email

“Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success”.—Swami Sivananda

If you hear a voice within you say, “you cannot paint”, then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.—Vincent Van Gogh

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have”.—Maya Angelou

“Laughter is the fireworks of the soul”.—Josh Billings

Dear Marketing Students,

I have always had a strong sense of humor. It has helped me “break the ice” and make people comfortable about trying new things! I will likely continue to show a sense of humor in almost everything I do! Understand, though, that I want you to have fun in this course—and it begins by developing a good initial foundation. Your new Mktg. xxx course is now open, and I want you to take it for a spin!

Your New Owner’s Manual: What to Do When You Sit in The Driver’s Seat?

When you sit into the “car seat”, check the controls before you put the course into drive. Race to my introductory Welcome Announcement! Then, drive through the different comments and assignments in week one. Take a spin through them now! They will take little gas or require any need to use your car’s map navigation.

Now, put the course into drive! Rev up your engine and realize that you are going to enjoy the experience! What can stop you? Going into reverse by waiting a bit too long to read any chapters of the book? Or getting an older edition of the book? This will be similar to putting the wrong gasoline in your tank! In addition, realize that I am the “back seat driver” who wants to help you! I cannot do my job and help you unless you write me for help.

Take a brief spin through the book! Few chapters are due before you take your first driving quiz during the third week. You should not need to get out and “kick your tires”. If you think that you will, honk at xxx@xxx.edu.

Take a spin around the block now! Know that I have a sense of humor—and always will—and that I take your experience this semester seriously, too! There are no “secrets” to driving this vehicle other than to start a little bit early—and keeping in touch if I may do anything. You are “required” to have a most exhilarating semester!! Some of you have had a long drive this last year, with the Pandemic, and other terrible events! Believe in the inspirational quotes at the top of this letter—and they will drive you to go through any spooky road!! I am going to love having you in this course!

The best!!,

Dr. xxx