A MODEL OF THE BUSINESS SCHOOL AS A DEVELOPER OF ACHIEVERS

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ABSTRACT

Historically, we have used two models of our relationship with students: student as product and student as customer. Neither is satisfactory because neither leads to development of skills and networks that students need for success in business. A model of "Student as Achiever" is proposed and its implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, we have used two models of our relationship with students:

Under the older model, the student was a product. Schools converted raw material (ignorant students) into finished goods (educated students). We believed that we knew what students needed to learn, we taught it to them and the grades they received on exams proved our effectiveness.

Under the newer model, the student is a customer. We put on a good show. We cover in lectures and audio-visual presentations everything that will appear on exams. We are always available and attentive to students' needs. Students rate our performance and our high evaluation scores prove that we are doing a good job.

When we follow the first model, our students learn to be attentive note-takers, text-book memorizers and efficient regurgitators of facts and theories on exams. While these skills are of some value, they are not high on any employer's list of factors that lead to success in the business world.

When we follow the second model we become spoon-feeders and hand-holders and we relieve students of responsibility for their education. Students learn even less than under the older model and become whiners and complainers. Employers are not pleased about the bad attitudes and illiteracy of job applicants.

Neither model is acceptable because neither model helps students to succeed in the present business climate. Neither model equips students with the skills employers expect or the entrepreneurial attitude and skills that students need for career success. We need a model that helps students to succeed and helps the other participants in the educational process to achieve their goals.
WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS AND WHAT ARE THEIR OBJECTIVES?

Schools want alumni who achieve high level positions or start successful businesses so that they can offer jobs to other students graduating from the school. Schools also want their graduates to become rich and famous so that they add prestige to the school and are in a position to give substantial gifts to the school. Schools' objectives form a good starting point for designing the new model.

Students want worry-free education: modest workloads, exams that are not too difficult and generous grading policies. They also want offers of jobs that pay well, are not too demanding and provide opportunities for advancement. Students' objectives are unrealistic. If they want successful careers in business, they have to put up with a challenging education.

Employers want employees who have the attitudes, knowledge and skills that enable them to perform well on the job. These include: general background in business, deep knowledge of a relevant business discipline, excellent oral and written communications skills, strong analytical skills, influencing and negotiating skills and crossfunctional teamworking skills. Employers' objectives are non-negotiable. The most desirable employers have the freedom to recruit wherever their needs will be satisfied best.

THE NEW MODEL: "STUDENT AS ACHIEVER"

Under the new model, students are developed to become achievers. This is a departure from the widely used current model that treats students as passive consumers of teachers' performances. The initial steps in adopting the "Students As Achiever" model follow.

The school defines the skills and knowledge students need if they are to become achievers. The school may start with two types of overlapping skills and knowledge that students need: Type 1, for satisfying employers' needs and wants and Type 2, for managing their own careers and/or succeeding in their own businesses.

Regarding Type 1, the school may use the list of employer wants presented above. This list should be updated periodically through research.

Regarding Type 2, in addition to everything referred to above, students need career marketing skills, such as: setting up career objectives for 5 years and 10 years out, starting and building up an Accomplishments File and obtaining information for planning and implementing a career path.

In addition, students need to develop active and growing networks of people with whom they exchange information and referrals. These networks will help them to perform better on their current job, to get better jobs and will also provide information and contacts for starting their own business.
To sum up, the new model focuses the school on helping students to achieve all the success that they are inherently capable of achieving and that circumstances permit.

**BEHAVIOR UNDER THE "STUDENT AS ACHIEVER" MODEL**

The school provides accurate information about employment opportunities: number of entry level jobs in each field, including location, starting salaries, typical responsibilities and career paths. The school also provides specific information about employers' needs and requirements for career success. The school offers curricula that prepare students well for the jobs that will be available to them. It also provides services such as career planning services, alumni/students networking meetings and continuing education and referrals for alumni.

Teachers are guides, not lecturers. They set assignments that help students to acquire the skills, knowledge and networks that they need. They evaluate students' work and provide feedback. On a longer term basis, teachers develop new assignments, curricula and teaching methodologies to keep up with changing requirements and opportunities. Administrators use the portfolio approach in evaluating teachers' performance.

Students accept complete responsibility for their education. They are highly motivated because they appreciate the value of every aspect of the education provided by the business school. They do not rate the performance of teachers in front of the classroom. They rate their own progress toward achieving their career goals and develop strategies for improving their performance.

Graduating students go into "business for themselves." They sell their knowledge and skills and they have a network of people who can provide them with information and referrals. They have a career marketing plan and are implementing it. While they make use of corporate recruiters, students are not dependent on them.

Employers hire students (buy services from them) according to purchasing guidelines: quality, dependability, capacity for growth and cost.

Because students have received work-oriented education and training, the only requirement for additional training is of a specific enterprise-oriented nature.

After students become employees or entrepreneurs, the school becomes an important participant in their networks. The school and the alumni exchange information and referrals. The school offers continuing education and networking meetings.

In promoting the school to prospective students, the school conveys the message that the program of instruction is designed to enable them to achieve all that their natural endowment and opportunities in the business world will permit. The school supports this claim with a detailed explanation of the program of instruction the teaching methodologies used and testimonials of alumni and employers.
AN EXAMPLE OF AN ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTED COURSE

In another paper being presented at the 1999 Southwestern Marketing Association meeting, the author describes "The 100% Experiential Learning and Authentic Learning Marketing Course," a course the author developed and refined over the last eight years on the basis of needs expressed by graduating MBA students, needs expressed by employers and his own experiences as a corporate employee and consultant. At class meetings (with the exception of the first week) there are no lectures. Instead, students engage in team projects in class, and give presentations on their team efforts and on individual projects that they conduct outside of class. Students use a standard introductory textbook and a workbook developed by the instructor as a source of instructions for performing four projects: case study analyses, an Influencing experience, a Negotiating experience and a Networking experience. For mid-term and final exams, students prepare papers at home in which they describe how they expect to apply assigned marketing concepts and methods in the positions that they expect to have in 7 to 10 years. Evidence of comprehension of the textbook is required. The Marketing textbook is also used for team discussions and presentations of selected end-of-chapter questions of a decision-making nature.

The tangible and visible outcomes of this course are improvements in students' ability to:

1. Speak and write intelligently about Marketing.
2. Analyze and think creatively about unstructured business situations.
4. Conduct a carefully planned influencing encounter.
5. Conduct a carefully planned negotiating encounter.
7. Gain useful information through personal interviews, attendance at meetings and the internet.

In the author's opinion all of the above are essential for achieving success in business.

CONCLUSION

A new model has been proposed in this paper describing a new relationship between the business school and its students. Instead of depicting students as a passive consumers of "teaching," we now see students as achievers taking full responsibility for their education. Teachers do not lecture or give high-tech audio-visual presentations. Instead, they guide students in the completion of assignments that have a direct bearing on their careers.

Implementing this model requires change in the orientation of the school, the work of teachers and students and the nature of evaluation systems. The promised outcome is a much higher level of satisfaction of the needs of the school, the students and their employers.