

# ENSURING SUCCESS FOR CLIENT-BASED PROJECTS: AN ADVERTISING COURSE CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*While there are drawbacks to incorporating team projects into a marketing course, client-based projects (CBPs) provide real-world experiential learning that cannot be taught through most other methods of instruction. However, incorporating these projects can require enormous planning and effort on the part of instructors, often resulting in unpredictable, unsatisfactory results. This paper examines how to elevate the satisfaction level and value of client-based marketing projects for both instructors and students. Through several terms of experience with CBPs in advertising courses, the author outlines which aspects create higher student satisfaction and an enhanced level of client satisfaction.*

## INTRODUCTION

Real-world business interaction through client-based projects (CBPs) can be a valuable piece of preparation for students in any field. For business students, and marketing majors in particular, this face-to-face interaction is even more essential to students' own perceptions of how much practical preparatory value they have received from their education. This method affects how sufficiently they believe their marketing education has prepared them to work in the real world. Further, in order to allow students to be the beneficiaries of this form of real-world learning, instructors must learn how to be experts in cultivating not only the "best" clients that can provide this for students, but how to structure projects to provide those best clients with satisfactory student results.

Providing satisfaction at the highest level possible for both students and clients translates to ongoing relationships to tap for future class projects. These ongoing relationships are extremely important because previous research is clear that CBPs are valuable not only to clients and students, but to professors, the universities they are affiliated with, and the communities the universities reside within (Easterling and Rudell 1997; Fox 2002; Haas and Wortruba 1990; Linrud and Hall 1999). So, finding the best clients for students and instructors to have an ongoing relationship with is essential to CBP success.

To ensure CBP success, it is often the instructor who determines who those good clients are (Lopez and Lee 2005). The instructor is the individual who recruits, screens, and selects which clients students will interact and work with. Previous research has established several principles to find workable clients (de los Santos and Jensen 1985; Fecho 2004; Goodell and Kraft 1991; Hayes and Silver 2004; Laughton and Ottewill 1998; Lopez and Lee 2005). Part of the success in this area seems driven by how the

client is drawn into the academic world and thereby ultimately brought into the classroom. Despite the challenges, there are distinct advantages to incorporating CBPs into the classroom learning process.

## ADVANTAGES OF CLIENT-BASED PROJECTS (CBPS)

Marketing, and advertising specifically, are applied disciplines. Therefore, it is more important than in any other academic area, for students to have practice and become proficient in applying the concepts. Using text-based case studies are static, one-dimensional simulations of real-world problems. Contrary to that, CPBs are more multi-dimensional simulations—and therefore involve less static application of the material. In addition, CBPs have an advantage of transpiring in the present. As a result, they are live, creating situations that are more realistic and relevant to students.

In addition to relevancy, students working on real-world projects become a critical part of the decision-making process for the business or organization that commissioned them. This forces students to be immersed in specific advertising problems where real-life business rules apply. Students must identify which of the rules to use – and when and how to apply them to a specific situation.

Overall, the key advantage of CPBs is that the projects are realistic in that they incorporate real companies, real products or services, real competitors, and real decision-makers (Burns 1990). These projects, then, provide a conduit between the theoretical principles presented in a text and applying those concepts—rather than merely using hypothetical cases to practice skills acquired. The projects provide continuity by showing how the principles taught are part of the active process of business – as

opposed to a collection of isolated techniques that must be passively learned (Burns 1990).

Real projects promote a less passive approach because deeper engagement is required. Deeper engagement is a critical factor in achieving deeper learning. Therefore, because CBPs require more meaningful engagement, students' ownership of the learning process is also enhanced. This results in more interest in learning, as well as a stronger desire to learn.

## **USING THE CONSULTANT MODEL AS GUIDE**

To begin deciding how to incorporate client-based projects, examining some of the past literature surrounding student consulting projects is highly applicable in developing a guidance system for ensuring success in using client-based projects. A key element of the consulting approach is turning over leadership of the classroom and the company to students (Robinson 2010). Students learn to serve their community by essentially providing consulting services to local businesses that serve as their clients. Consultant-based learning may begin with educational outcomes, but uses community service as a means to attain those outcomes (Dallimore and Souza 2002). Using a consulting process also helps students achieve the learning objectives of a client-based project including "construction of professionally useful knowledge, development of reasoning and problem solving strategies, development of self-directed learning strategies, increasing motivation for the learner, and becoming effective collaborators" (Sherwood 2004).

In using the consulting model, students can serve an organization in two ways. One way is to provide advice regarding the process. In this form, the client continues to own the problem and the student consultants provide an effective process to reach a solution. This approach differs from technical consulting where the student consultant takes the problem and resolves it for a client (Schein 1999).

When a course is constructed to include the consultant learning process, it is built on a different paradigm from traditional courses. In this approach, the required quality of work students perform is held to a higher standard. This standard is based on the client's assessment of success. The work must be professional and satisfy the client or the students will receive less credit for the work—in the form of a significantly lower grade (Kunkel 2002).

To ensure success for both students and clients, some instructors provide a "menu" of project options from which less creative and/or more venturesome students may select. This allows for a more appropriate fit between the consulting project and the specific students enrolled during that particular academic term. Some instructors require that before students complete a project, the team must submit a proposal that goes to the client (Kunkel

2002). An advantage of this is that the client has more input and evaluation at an earlier stage of the consulting—before the end of the project. Many have found much more focused results and the clients are much happier with those results. This method also forces students to present a specific outline of their planned promotional work and an opportunity for the client to identify which ideas will work and which will not. The students must then construct a revised proposal and resubmit to the client and to the instructor.

## **KEY GENERAL PROJECT FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CBP STRUCTURE**

Varying the project scope and size to accommodate several projects within one class term can be beneficial to both clients and students. Client-based projects can be created that are small, medium, or large in size and scope, as outlined in previous research (Lopez and Lee 2005). The size, in this case, is defined by both length of time needed for completion, as well as the scope of the project. According to the previously established definitions, a small size project is one that can be completed in one to two weeks, a medium size project can be completed in three to four weeks, and a large size project may extend over an entire term, or at least five to six weeks. In addition to length of time, the scope of the project is an additional structural consideration.

The scope of a small project is defined as anything from designing a logo, name, and packaging for a new product to a brief positioning exercise. An example of a medium scope project could include designing a new brand image for a product or service, or a company or organization. Finally, a project that is defined as large in scope normally involves more in-depth research, more fully developed creative executions, and a complete six-month advertising campaign. (Table 1 provides overview of alternative models of class projects.)

It is often important to have students experience each type of project, however, as this is more reflective of real-world work. What often works well, if selected and structured appropriately, is to have at least one of each of the three types of projects, if there is more than one project per course within a single term.

There are advantages and disadvantages of each type of project, however. Smaller projects take less time, normally one to two-weeks. The advantage of this type is the length of time required—especially within a ten-week quarter system. The disadvantage is that because it is shorter in length, it naturally has less depth of concept application. This can potentially result in a less valuable learning exercise. A medium size project takes more time—which is a disadvantage during one course term, but involves more application of the course concepts resulting in a higher degree of learning. The large projects are possibly the best tool for learning and that is certainly

**TABLE 1**  
**ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF CLASS PROJECTS**

<b>Client/Business</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Category</b>
Ski Resort	1–2 weeks	logo/name	small
Local Auto Dealership	1–2 weeks	new signage/in-store promos	small
Real Estate Company	1–2 weeks	one-day event promotions	small
Alumni Association	3–4 weeks	new image/repositioning	medium
Dental Service	3–4 weeks	repositioning	medium
ASPCA	3–4 weeks	one-time event promotions	medium
Beer Distribution Co.	8–9 weeks	6–mo. product launch ad campaign	large
Domestic Violence Council	8–9 weeks	6–mo. awareness campaign	large
Goodwill Industries	8–9 weeks	12–mo. ad campaign	large

an advantage. However, the steps necessary to fully develop a long-term advertising project has disadvantages as well. The quality can suffer, as students often do not have sufficient time to complete everything required to do their best work. These larger projects are also the most stressful, sometimes resulting in more team conflicts. The advantages and disadvantages that can vary by the project size and scope are important considerations. But the overall benefit of all projects is that these challenges create a realistic experience in team, time, and quality management – all crucial to preparing students for the real world.

Having multiple feasible projects gives students the experience of balancing their time, effort, and creativity working on multiple competing projects, all with specific draft and final version deadlines. This more closely reflects a real work experience, at least in the advertising world. Including projects of varied length allows students more exposure to a broader range of real-world experiences, and allows instructors more flexibility to find projects that fit within the course content, learning objectives, and time constraints. When the project length is a good match between student and clients needs, clients see that adapting their project to fit is efficient and produces useful results. When this occurs, clients are enthusiastic about offering not just future classroom projects, but more likely to offer future employment to those students and serve as a professional networking contact. This provides an additional benefit to completing the coursework from the students' perspective.

#### **KEY PRELIMINARY FACTORS FOR INSTRUCTOR TO CONSIDER IN CLIENT SELECTION**

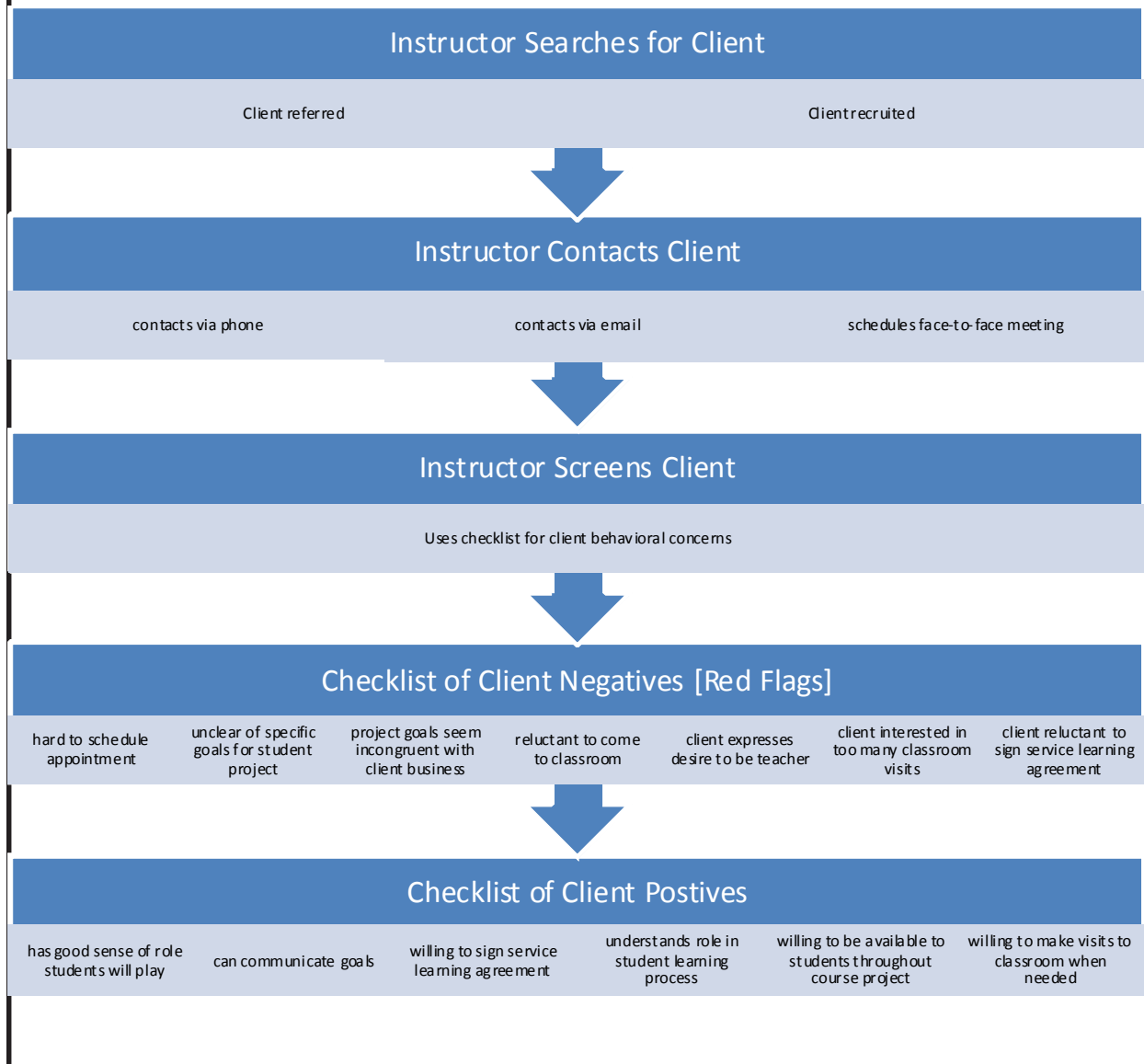
Based on the author's own classroom experiences, there are normally four key considerations in client selection and retention: (1) clients that come to the instructor; (2) clients the instructor recruits; (3) clients that are overinvolved; (4) clients that are underinvolved.

The last two of these considerations, which occur on a continuum from clients who are underinvolved to those who are overinvolved, are dependent on a number of positives and negatives the instructor must evaluate before proceeding with a project and client. The ideal client is someone who has characteristics somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. Using a Table (Table 2) listing both positive and negative signs has been useful to the instructor.

#### **Clients that Come to the Instructor**

Clients that come to the instructor often do so through three key avenues. One, some clients contact the department chair or business school dean directly and are in search of "free" work from students. Two, there are other clients who come to the instructor through a colleague. Three, clients coming to the instructor may be former students of the marketing department, and that person is now working in the marketing field. Their initial intention may include a desire to provide an experience to current students they wish they had been able to acquire during

**TABLE 2  
CLIENT SELECTION PROCESS**



their own college coursework. While all three of these methods of contact and introduction are acceptable, those who are unsolicited directly by the instructor more frequently result in what some researchers have categorized as “bad” clients (Goodell and Kraft 1991; Fox 2002; Laughton and Ottewill 1998; Papamarcos 2002; Swan and Hansen 1996).

**Clients the Instructor Recruits**

Despite the three previously outlined less desirable client avenues, there are methods of acquiring clients that seem to be more workable. Based on the experiences of

the author, when the instructor independently finds or seeks out a potential client, the client often proves to be more feasible. These clients are not necessarily in search of students to use for their own purposes. While securing this type of client may require more persuasion on the part of the instructor, they have more understanding that their personal level of involvement and personal level of respect toward students can affect the quality of their project results.

Further, they are more likely to accept that the instructor and students themselves have specific learning objectives, time constraints, and a limited level of real-world expertise. This merely means these good clients are

more willing to select and adapt projects to best suit mutual outcome needs. When clients work in this manner, students report more attributes that are positive about the experience, even if they do not particularly like the topic of the project. In addition to the positive attributes students report when the instructor finds the client, there are two additional factors to consider that an instructor cannot predict until they bring that client into the classroom. These two additional factors are whether the client is overinvolved or underinvolved.

### **Overinvolved Clients**

Overinvolved clients often want to take on the role of an instructor, rather than a consultant. These clients are not always as respectful and helpful to students and sometimes appear to emit an aura of superiority. This has been evident with both graduates and undergraduates, regardless of the age and professional background of the students. It appears these clients consider their real-world knowledge so superior to anyone currently residing in a classroom that they become quite ineffective in explaining or coordinating project details, much less constructive feedback in evaluating student results. These clients often appear to try to apply tougher, unrealistic standards in evaluating student work. Their oral feedback is at times more scathing, cynical, and ego-driven. They tend to want more time with a class in explaining more about themselves, the importance of their company, and their personal professional position. While there are limited aspects this real-world overinvolved client provides that can be valuable to students, the information is more often not relevant to the project itself, nor to the learning of the course concepts.

### **Underinvolved Clients**

Contrary to the overinvolved client, an underinvolved client is not necessarily a plus either. The underinvolved client does not necessarily want to spend less of their time helping students. This is often more of a lack of time in their own schedules. They are more likely not to have a realistic perception of the amount of client input needed during the introduction and midway points of the project. At times, they prefer to pass information for students through the instructor, and have the instructor put forth the majority of the effort in explaining the details of the project. This type of client wants the instructor to suggest or evaluate positives and negatives of potential creative ideas in advance. In the final phase of the project, they are more likely to be unsatisfied with students' results and level of creativity, but unlikely to attribute the limited results to their underinvolvement. At times, the sheer enormity of the project scope was unrealistic, which might underscore the importance of the instructor not just evaluating whether the client is good or bad, but whether

the project scope and size is appropriate for a CBP.

In addition, presenting a client agreement form that must be signed by the client significantly reduces the pitfalls encountered in each category. Presenting the agreement in table 3 during the initial meeting with the client has worked extremely well in clarifying the instructor's expectations and level of commitment expected by clients. This agreement presents these expectations more as a guide to success. This is not a legal document, but more a tool to ensure a clear understanding of the expectations and more incentive for the client/business to view those expectations seriously. [Table 3 shows agreement form used to reduce undesirable of potential clients].

## **SPECIFIC GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING THE CLIENT-BASED PROJECT**

### **Phase 1: Evaluating Suitability of Potential Business, Projects, Client**

This phase begins prior to start of course. In this phase, there are really three steps. First, evaluate the type of business or organization to assess the appropriateness of this business for a student project. Basically, this means a business or organization that is in need of consulting assistance, but will respect the expertise that can be brought to them from an academic perspective, rather than merely in search of any and all "free" advice. While students will not be paid monetarily for their services, their efforts are to be respected and this expectation must be set forth to any potential clients.

In addition, not every business is appropriate for the outcome goals of every marketing course utilizing client-based projects. For example, a basic marketing principles course may focus on the "4 p's" – product, place, price, promotion, and target markets, and organization that has more business-to-business needs, may not fit well within the outcome goal structure of that type of business. So, businesses like this may have a system that has no substantial marketing efforts directly to consumers, yet they may perceive the business as in need of marketing assistance. An example of this is an agricultural business that grows, packages, and distributes oranges, may distribute and thus "market" to other businesses like grocery stores and supercenters, but does not market directly to consumers. A business like this may not be a good match to serve the outcomes goals for the course.

Second, once it is determined that the organization or business is a possible fit for the course, the instructor evaluates the organization's specific project available for students. For example, an organization that markets directly to consumers, but has a very abstract marketing mission, such as a desire to improve the image of that business as "sustainable" might be too abstract a concept for students from a variety of business disciplines enrolled in a required basic marketing principles course. While a marketing

**TABLE 3**

**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & MARKETING  
PLAN FOR CLIENT-BASED PROJECT  
SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT AGREEMENT**

***SUCCESSFUL CLIENT-BASED PROJECTS TYPICALLY INCLUDE***

1. Clients who know the business, are enthusiastic, and can spark interest for the business when talking to students. Clients should have sufficient knowledge about what they want students to accomplish for their business so that they are able to clearly verbalize what they want in several ways:
  - a. They must have a sense of the “big picture” and convey that to students. You may bring handouts for students with detailed explanations of the structure of the organization and the mission statement of the organization to provide the big picture.
  - b. Clients must be clear on the general, end goals of what they want, and clearly outline their expectations.
  - c. Clients also must have some sense of what they do NOT want and able to convey that to students as well – with an explanation of why. For example, the client might describe the history of the company or explain what it contributes to the community.
2. Clients willing to be available as necessary and as arranged prior to the implementation of the project. Clients must understand that students have deadlines to meet to complete the work based on the length of the course. Clients must be willing to be available via email or phone to address questions that might arise as the students develop the project. The student contact can be limited to the student project manager only (one appointed student per team), to reduce a flood of emails or phone calls to the client. The instructor will explain to students that the clients are busy professionals with real-world work responsibilities, and therefore direct contact must be limited.

***CLIENT INVOLVEMENT EXPECTATIONS***

1. Agrees to visit classroom three times throughout course, at times specified and prearranged between client and course instructor.
2. Agrees to provide students and instructor with an email and phone number where client can be contacted at least once per week throughout the course.
3. Agrees to guide students’ work via written and verbal feedback throughout course and submit a brief final written and oral evaluation of each team’s achievement upon at the end of the course.
4. Agrees to discuss concerns about any student’s performance with the student directly, as well as with the instructor, as necessary.
5. Agrees to arrange a general work site visit and orientation for students at the client’s organization, at a time and date agreed upon by both parties.
5. Agrees to make every reasonable effort to provide a respectful working relationship. The client understands that he/she is accepting students as volunteers, that you are not responsible for providing wages, but agree to assist the instructor by evaluating whether the students completed project requirements in a satisfactory manner.

***CLIENT NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Site Visit Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number and Email \_\_\_\_\_

***STUDENT INFORMATION*** [Name and ID Number of Students Participating in Project]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

project of that nature may have a place in a more specialized course, it may not be appropriate for a course at a basic level. This kind of project goal may also not work well in allowing students to apply the basic material that is intended to be part of the course.

Third is assessing the character and motivation of the individual person (client) who will be interacting with students. There are several areas key to this assessment, but the best place to begin is by discussing and presenting the “Plan for Client-Based Project—Service Learning Agreement” (table 3). This is a document that outlines the instructor’s expectations and provides a clear overview of what is expected of the client throughout the course. If the client seems reluctant or unwilling to sign this agreement, then the instructor may want to refrain from using that client for a course project.

All three objectives must be satisfied for there to be a successful outcome for both the organization and for students. Once a signed agreement is in place, the client/business can be considered a viable potential project for the course.

## **Phase 2: Assembling Student Teams for Success**

This phase should begin during the second class meeting and the results of this phase will determine team project assignments, as well as team member assignments. This should be determined by beginning of week two of the course. By the time you reach this phase, you have already secured three possible workable business/project/client combinations. In this phase, there are two goals in assigning student teams.

First is that each student, to the extent possible, is working for a type of business (profit/nonprofit, specific area within profit/nonprofit) they have some interest in – thus providing high degree of motivation to do well. This is because if students have an interest in the nature of the business, they are more motivated to do well – and they may view the client as a future contact in the job market

Second, it is helpful to assemble teams based on varying academic strengths. To accomplish this, the questionnaire distributed during week one of the course gathers information on the specific student pool enrolled in the class that term. This survey evaluates project preferences and one evaluates team role preferences (project manager, strength of organization skills, oral presentation skills, writing skills, time management skills).

To determine these two areas, a pre-project questionnaire is distributed to students in the class. [Table 4 contains items included in pre-project questionnaire.] In addition, to incorporate factors that worked well and/or eliminate unanticipated challenges with the projects or clients, a post-project questionnaire is given to students during the last week of the course – after they have submitted the final written client report and completed the final oral presentation of the their work to the client.

[Table 5 contains items included in post-project questionnaire.]

## **KEY FACTORS IN STUDENTS’ POST-PROJECT PERSPECTIVE OF CBP VALUE**

In addition to the satisfaction of forging potential future employment and networking contacts, students reported satisfaction in other areas as well when the clients were appropriately selected. While it was thought that student liking for a specific project topic or subject matter might affect their level of satisfaction, most reported that this did not matter. Most reported that the opportunity for real-world experience was far more valuable than what can be learned from a textbook or lecture on anything. Students stated that applying course concepts through CBPs not only allowed a method to learn concepts more thoroughly, but that they felt they would retain those concepts for a longer period of time. This retention factor, they felt, was an asset in securing employment and performing well in real-world employment.

Further, students believed acquiring a realistic view of the real world helped them decide what type of work they wanted to pursue in the future. In fact, some believed that the less they liked the project topic, the more they had to stretch their ability to stay focused and create positive results. They appreciated the challenge of working on multiple projects throughout the term. However, varying the length of those projects if there was more than one was key. During academic terms where there were short projects, but too many of them, dissatisfaction was high. Likewise, when there were fewer projects, but they were too large in scope, dissatisfaction was also high.

In spite of dissatisfaction in some areas throughout the classes examined for this paper, there were other specific factors tied to client behavior that dissatisfied students. They valued clients who made initial classroom visits early in the term, and clearly detailed the desired outcomes at that time. Students also valued clients who returned to the classroom at a midway point to review and discuss a draft version of their preliminary ideas. Clients were praised by students when they made themselves available via email on a consistent basis. However, it was the midway feedback session, in particular, that proved to be valuable to both students and clients.

During these midway feedback sessions, students engaged in a confidential sit-down roundtable meeting with the client for about 30 minutes per team. Each team was afforded a room to meet privately with the client during this period. This method was to ensure that competing teams in the class did not have access to another team’s ideas until the final project presentations. Each team is assigned a specific time slot they must be present, within the regularly scheduled class period. During this client visit, all student teams are given a shorter portion of time so the client need only make one visit for this session.

**TABLE 4**  
**CLIENT-BASED PRE-PROJECT TEAM ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Do you prefer to work on a project for a profit-oriented business or nonprofit organization? Why?
2. If you had to devise a marketing strategy or analysis, which of the following businesses/organizations is most appealing to you? Circle your top two below—or write in something else you want to suggest:
  - a. Red Cross
  - b. Homeless Center
  - c. Goodwill Industries
  - d. Clothing/Shoe store
  - e. Restaurant/some type of food
  - f. Health club/something else tied to health
  - g. Other—make a suggestion here of your own that you would prefer over anything listed above.
3. When you must participate as part of a group project, do feel that you are clearly a take-charge person who assumes a leadership role or are you more of a follower, preferring to simply go along with whatever everyone else wants? If neither of these two categories really fits the role you like to take on, please explain that as well.
4. Do you see yourself as a good writer? Why or why not?
5. If you hate to write, when you must participate in a group project, do you prefer that others do most of the writing? Alternatively, is you feel you are an excellent writer, do you prefer to take responsibility for the writing?
6. Do you think your statistical/mathematical/analytical skills are good and prefer to assume the “number-crunching” responsibilities with a group project?
7. Are you good at research and gathering information? Why or why not?
8. Do you believe you are an organized person? Why or why not?
9. Do you like giving oral presentations? Why or why not?
10. Do feel comfortable when working on a team or do you prefer working alone most of the time?
11. What do you think makes a successful student team for a class project?
12. Would you like to have one student on the team be a “project manager” so anyone engaging in “free-loading” behavior can be “fired” from the team? (Free-loading is someone who is not doing much for the team, does not show up for meetings, does not respond to emails/phone calls, and/or is never in class)
13. Would you be interested in being a project manager/team organizer for a team? Why or why not?
14. Would you be interested in being a project manager if you earned a 10% guaranteed “A” in the course? Why or why not?

This afforded students an opportunity to give a preview of their overall strategy without the visual support of the final creative executions. This resulted in students feeling more confident about their oral communication skills. Students also were better equipped to sell their ideas orally without the benefit of fully developed written material. This was a much quicker process logistically as well for clients. Students also report that using this procedure helps them feel more competent and confident in moving ahead to the final phase of refining and completing the project. They report feeling re-energized because they have a higher degree of certainty as to which of their ideas are workable and which are not. This midway session is an excellent opportunity to test numerous preliminary ideas to see which aspects of their plan are headed in the right direction and which are not. This session also allows them the opportunity to learn what is feasible monetarily and logistically.

This real-world feedback is highly valued by students because while they may have excellent ideas from a creative perspective, there may be aspects of those ideas that they may not realize are not feasible in their specific geographic market. The client within a certain region can give more specific locale information based on the geographic location, ethnic composition, and socio-economic composition of the specific city in which the university resides. While the instructor can give limited feedback in this direction based on theory or general information written in within a textbook, sometimes real world current knowledge about the specifics of the marketing field – and advertising especially—are best addressed by real-world clients.

In giving this feedback, real-world clients have a much better feel for current day-to-day marketing field practical aspects than tenure-track instructors do. While the tenure-track instructor can give limited feedback that



**TABLE 5**  
**CLIENT-BASED POST-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Did you like the real-world projects you have been assigned for this course? Why or why not?
2. Did you feel highly motivated to do a good job on the projects for this course? Why or why not?
3. How did your team experience affect your perspective about completing the real-world project?
4. Do you believe real-world projects are of value in learning about advertising and marketing as a whole? Why or why not?
5. Were you satisfied with the type of project you were assigned? Why or why not?
6. Was it appealing to you that your ideas for the project recommendations may be used in real-world applications? Why or why not?
7. What aspects of the real-world project would you change if you could recommend something for future courses of this kind?
8. How satisfied are you with the level of involvement and/or feedback by the outside client?
9. Which of the clients and projects did you like best – and why?
10. What did you hope to gain from working on real-world projects for a college business course?
11. Did your team experience affect what you personally gained from working on a real-world project?
12. What is your opinion of the adequacy of the length/timing deadlines for the project?
13. Would it be more useful to have feedback from the instructor or the client on your project at more intervals throughout the course?
14. Did you think you did better on the actual written execution for the project or the oral selling/communication of your ideas – why or why not?

may seem correct, that individual may not be any clearer or certain of what the real-world client working in a specific city will find satisfying in the end. A risk an instructor takes in giving too much specific feedback from the academic perspective is that the client may not be satisfied in some way. The students then feel the instructor is somehow responsible if they take the instructor's advice and the client does not like it. Therefore, sometimes the best move an instructor can make is to "get out of the way" of the interaction between students and clients. Being able to do this, however, depends on having clients who do not rely heavily on the instructor as a consistent intermediary in communicating client desired outcomes.

To achieve successful desired outcomes, the final projects are presented orally to clients and final written work reviewed at that time. Students seem to find this format of evaluation given by the client more valuable than even the project grade assigned by the instructor. Usually they go hand in hand, and if the client gives high marks to a team for their project final results, the instructor will also assess high marks. However, this is not always the case and it is interesting to note that students take the specific verbal and written comments of the client more seriously than those of the instructor. They view clients are more credible and more closely tied to the potential of their real-world success upon graduation. They value the reward of pleasing the client, and getting positive feedback from the client, more than the grade reward given by the instructor.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on several academic terms of incorporating CBPs into a specific advertising course within a marketing program, there are three key lessons learned. First, it is important to note that what is presented here as a guide can certainly have exceptions. On occasion, there have been cases, for example, where the author has had clients referred by other and/or have come to the instructor directly that have produced satisfactory results. What has been learned from these deviances from what was expected is that possibly the most important piece of the selection process is more the screening itself—rather than the manner in which the client comes to the instructor.

Second, selecting the correct type of business, project, and client is essential to student satisfaction with the real-world learning experience—regardless of how the client comes to the instructor. While potential clients are recruited through many avenues, using a screening process that includes a written agreement helps lay the foundation for a successful real-world experience for students and satisfactory outcomes for clients and community businesses.

Third, structuring teams in a way that draws on students' varying academic strengths and interests is helpful as well. But beyond that, students' satisfaction with client selection results in their word-of-mouth advertising of their positive experience. This translates to more demand for that specific course, as well as more credibil-

ity and satisfaction with the instructor, as well as any course that instructor has that incorporates CBPs.

If this level of credibility and satisfaction also exists on the client end, they are more likely to maintain an ongoing relationship and reduce the instructor's need to find new good clients. Additionally, from an external public relations perspective, satisfied clients are likely to spread the word of their positive experience with student projects. As a result, the instructor can find it much easier to cultivate more clients to draw from for CBPs. This also results in better prospective contacts for an instructor's marketing students. Given current economic challenges, this may give them a competitive edge in securing one of

the more limited employment opportunities that will exist upon graduation.

The hope is that this paper provides a range of suggestions for any marketing instructor to use in selecting clients and projects for their courses that will result in the highest degree of student satisfaction. Ultimately, CBPs may be increasingly important in helping our students be prepared to secure employment in an increasingly competitive real-world environment. Given this increasingly competitive real-world environment, particularly for marketing positions, anything we as instructors can do to ensure greater student success in that real world, is a worthwhile endeavor.

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