

Imagining Successful Teaching and Learning

Special Issue Editors

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To imagine oneself as one of the best instructors in your college is a step toward the hard work that good teaching requires. To imagine themselves as fully placed at graduation, having chosen an employer from amongst numerous job offers, students must combine their vision of a positive trajectory with hard work in/outside the classroom for growth and development. Imagining successful teaching and learning prompts sales educators to share their teaching innovations, allowing both teachers and learners to realize these positive outcomes. We are delighted to share a summary of the articles appearing in this special issue on Teaching Innovations in Sales Education.

IMAGINING ONESELF IN A GLOBAL SALES ROLE

Today's firms need entry-level salespeople ready to participate on cross-border sales teams. Yet, when students think about potential sales careers, most think through a parochial lens: *What positions are close to my family, friends, hometown or university?* Opportunities available in international sales roles go unexplored as many sales and marketing students cannot imagine themselves in such roles. We open this special issue with Herlache, Renkema, Cummins and Scovotti's article, *A Cross-Cultural Negotiation Role-Play for Sales Classes*, where the authors demonstrate how coupling traditional academic exchanges (in-classroom lectures on cultural differences and team negotiations) with global experiential exchanges (partnering students taking sales classes in two countries) overcomes parochial blinders increasing student propensity to pursue international sales careers. Student-pairs from American and Dutch universities engaged in a warm up exercise (virtual get-to-know-you) and then completed a cross-cultural negotiation exercise. Student intentions to pursue international sales careers were higher for students completing the global experiential exercise than for a control group suggesting faculty can prompt students to broaden their imagination.

We close this special issue with related paper by Rodriguez and Boyer which stretches student perspectives of buyer requirements and expectations in various cultural settings. These authors leverage Hofstede's cultural dimensions model in their paper, *Developing Tomorrow's Global Sales Leader: Adapting to Cultural Differences Utilizing Role Play*. This teaching innovation prompts student learning in the areas of researching cultures, analyzing cultural differences and adapting as a result. Interestingly, the innovation centers on the evaluative criteria (i.e., rubric) used in a national sales competition. Students complete a typical role play exercise (where the buyer is a native). Then, small student groups "revise" the role play evaluation

criteria for a sales call in which the buyer is non-native (from a specific foreign country). Students then complete the role play a second time with the non-native buyer. The exciting opportunity for educators in this research is the interesting framework for cultural comparison and the easy-to-implement teaching innovation.

PROMPTING THE BUYER'S IMAGINATION THROUGH STORY SELLING

Crossing from the global to the interpersonal perspective, Spiller shares a teaching innovation designed to help students learn how to effectively communicate with buyers in our noisy, busy world. In *Story-Selling: Creating and Sharing Authentic Stories that Persuade*, the author provides a valuable table which illustrates how Story-Selling can be incorporated throughout the selling process. Her teaching innovation is well positioned for an entry-level sales class. Specifically, students select an University-related event worthy of sharing; then following the in-class lectures on persuasive stories, students work both individually and in small teams to develop (iteratively through feedback) their final presentations. They learn to develop their persuasion skills and tap into the imagination of the buyer through a well-articulated process for development and feedback. Interestingly, sixty percent of the stories that students created are being used by the business school for external communications, while another thirty percent are being used for internal business school communication.

IMAGINING THE TALENT SELECTION PROCESS FOR BUILDING A SALES TEAM

Experienced faculty are probably familiar with the classic fictional resume screening exercise used to introduce recruiting and selection concepts into the sales management classroom. In their article, *Entry-Level Salesperson Selection: An Engaging Experiential Exercise for Sales Management Students*, Billups and Poddar share a welcome innovation which results in creating stronger student engagement than this time-honored approach. For their new-take on the resume-screening exercise, students must first develop an "anonymized" version of their own resumes. First, the professor introduces an actual sales job posting, and students develop their application materials for the job. After all materials are submitted to the classroom management system, students review and score their colleagues' materials. Next, a small-group exercise forces students to effectively collaborate with others when developing hiring priorities. Finally, the public exchange at the close of the term motivates students

toward revising their applications/resumes for future career opportunities.

WORKING IN UNCERTAINTY SPARKS REAL, NOT IMAGINED, CONFIDENCE

Scheduling executives as professional buyers or having faculty serve as buyers for student role plays are less-than-ideal uses of faculty members' time. However, having students simply role play among themselves can produce sub-optimal outcomes as students can be somewhat lax with their peers. In *Intercollegiate Role-Play: Creating a Sense of Reality and Uncertainty in the Sales Classroom*, Pelletier and Hopkins test drive the combination of role-playing with an unknown student (from another university) and doing so on a less-than-familiar platform (videoconferencing). This innovation introduces an appropriate level of uncertainty into the exchange, allowing students to imagine and overcome some of the uncertainties that exist in the business world. Orchestrating a partnership with a similar university/class requires less time and effort than scheduling executives or burning hours in a role-play lab, so faculty can imagine how this time shift will create personal benefits. Importantly, giving students the opportunity to engage with unfamiliar technology and role play partners inspires greater confidence and awareness, thereby prompting them to imagine greater success in the actual business world.

WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE

What an honor to work with these authors on this special issue focused on improving sales pedagogy. The work that our colleagues shared is inspiring and we hope that this special issue prompts our colleagues around the globe to re-imagine their classrooms and pedagogies.