

# SECTION 1

## ACTIVE LEARNING IN SERVICES MARKETING CLASSES

---

*“Much research exists documenting that real understanding is a case of active restructuring on the part of the learner. Restructuring occurs through engagement in problem posing as well as problem solving, inference making and investigation, resolving of contradictions, and reflecting. These processes all mandate for more active learners as well as a different model of education...students need to be empowered to think and learn for themselves. Thus learning needs to be conceived of as something a learner does, not something that is done to a learner.”*

-- from *Active Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom* (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith [1991] p. 1-20)

As you might guess, we are strong advocates for including active learning activities in marketing classes. Therefore, you will find several examples of such activities in this Active Learning Resource Guide. In order to prepare the reader, the material in the first section of this Active Learning Resource Guide includes two articles originally published in the *Journal of Marketing Education*.

The first article was initially published as the lead article in the Fall 1994 Special Issue on Services of the *Journal of Marketing Education*. [[Lauren K. Wright, Mary Jo Bitner, and Valarie A. Zeithaml \(1994\), ‘Paradigm Shifts in Business Education: Using Active Learning to Deliver Services Marketing Content,’ \*Journal of Marketing Education\*, 16 \(3\): 5-19.](#)] This article offers an overview of what is meant by active learning and provides a rationale for integrating this type of pedagogy into services marketing courses. A number of examples of active learning exercises are shown in Table 2 of the article.

The second article appeared in the Spring 2000 Special Issue on Experiential Learning in Marketing Courses in the *Journal of Marketing Education*. [[Gremler, Dwayne D., K. Douglas Hoffman, Susan M. Keaveney, and Lauren K. Wright \(2000\), “Experiential Learning Exercises in Services Marketing Courses,” \*Journal of Marketing Education\*, 22 \(1\), 35-44.](#)] This manuscript presents a portfolio of experiential learning exercises that can be used in services marketing courses to facilitate the integration of course concepts, teamwork and team building, communication and listening skills, and critical thinking and problem solving.

Both articles are included as part of the Instructor’s Manual set of materials with the permission of the *Journal of Marketing Education*.

# Paradigm Shifts in Business Education: Using Active Learning to Deliver Services Marketing Content

Lauren K. Wright, Mary Jo Bitner, and Valarie A. Zeithaml

*Business schools have recently been criticized for failing to prepare students for the increasingly complex, fast-paced, and global work environments they will face as employees of organizations in the 1990s and beyond. Students must be taught both new content and new skills in order to meet the changing needs of U.S. businesses. Services marketing is a prime example of the new content that must be added to business school curricula, since services now account for more than 70% of our GNP. Services marketing courses can also provide an excellent opportunity for students to practice critical new workplace skills.*

*The objectives of this article are to describe the changes necessary in marketing curricula to ensure that students have the appropriate skills and content to adequately meet the needs of their future employers; to provide an overview of services marketing course content; to describe the traditional and the active learning educational paradigms; to demonstrate how active learning techniques can be used to teach both content and skills in a services marketing course; and to provide specific examples of active learning exercises designed to address key content areas in services marketing.*

Of all the criticisms leveled at higher education, one of the most significant is that business education no longer prepares students to become effective employees and leaders (Porter and McKibbin 1988; Louis 1990). In summarizing these criticisms, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) claims that business schools

fail to provide the necessary tools (in problem-finding, problem-solving, communication, and people skills) and perspectives (viewing functional areas as part of a whole and applying a global outlook) that are essential for college graduates (Porter and McKibbin 1988). Business school programs have been assaulted for focusing too much on quantitative and technical skills and too little on interpersonal and communication skills (O'Reilly 1994; Louis 1990). This approach has created graduates who are better suited to traditional hierarchical corporations than the more fluid organizational forms emerging today. To make the educational challenge even more daunting, observers note that change is occurring so rapidly in the marketplace that uncertainty and chaos tend to rule. Universities have started to question "what exactly is it that an MBA—or anybody else—will need to know or do to be effective in business a decade from now. And is it teachable?" (O'Reilly 1994, p. 39).

Lauren K. Wright is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing of the College of Business at California State University, Chico. Mary Jo Bitner is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing of the College of Business at Arizona State University in Tempe. Valarie A. Zeithaml is a Consultant with Partners for Service Excellence in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Mary Jo Bitner acknowledges the financial support of an instructional grant funded by the Deans' Council of 100, the Economic Club of Phoenix, and the Alumni of Arizona State University's College of Business.

For marketing education to remain viable, both the process and content of marketing curricula must be changed to meet the needs of American businesses. Innovative teaching techniques must be adopted to provide a grounding in the skills that are central to students' effectiveness in the organizations of the 1990s and beyond, and courses that address the new knowledge requirements must join or supplant traditional courses that limit the marketing mix to the 4 Ps and view manufactured goods as the typical offering.

Services marketing is a prime example of new content needed in the marketing curriculum. A services marketing course introduces students to entirely new material, as well as to different ways of viewing traditional marketing content. The new topics include management and measurement of service quality, linking customer measurement to performance measurement, and an integration of marketing issues with other functional areas, such as operations and human resources. Each of these three topics represents pivotal content to the "horizontal corporations" of the future. These companies differ from traditional corporations in that they are designed around process rather than task, have flattened the hierarchical structure, use teams to manage everything, let customers drive performance, reward team performance, and maximize supplier and customer contact (Byrne 1993). Unless courses like services marketing draw this content into marketing education, students will lack the substantive knowledge to be effective in the new organizational forms. Services marketing courses also update and adapt standard material in product design, pricing, and promotion to adjust for the intangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability of the service offerings that account for more than 70% of the GNP in the United States today.

In addition to expanding course content, business school faculty must teach new skills in the classroom. There is increasing evidence indicating that employees and leaders in business need to develop or improve their abilities in the key areas discussed below.

- 1) **Cross-Functional Integration**  
Employees must be able to communicate across functional boundaries to solve problems. The days of being rooted in a single discipline (such as marketing or operations), working with information only from that function to make a critical decision, then "throwing it over the wall" into other functional areas are over. Effective employees are ones who can integrate information across the walls. As industry has urged business schools: "It's not just skills. It's the interrelationship of skills" (O'Reilly 1994, p. 40).
- 2) **Teamwork and Team Building**  
Employees need to work together to reach decisions by consensus, allocate tasks across a group, and pool the talent of multiple diverse workers. Employees must foster teamwork and partnership with suppliers and customers, as well as within their own organizations (Magnet 1994). Team building is a skill acquired by practice, which is one of the reasons many business schools are infusing Outward Bound Survival trips and experiential exercises into their programs. But getting real work accomplished in teams requires substantive learning as well, and a true integration of the teamwork process with meaningful content.
- 3) **Team or Servant Leadership**  
The skills that make leaders successful are different today than in the past. The new, "post-heroic" leader is one who distributes power among employees. According to Huey (1994), "Post-heroic leaders don't expect to solve all the problems themselves. They realize no one person can deal with the emerging and colliding tyrannies of speed, quality, customer satisfaction, innovation, diversity, and technology...(They) can break problems into manageable, status-neutral tasks that the group is willing to take on." To become such leaders, employees must learn to articulate tasks clearly, provide encouragement and support, and empower other employees to decide what needs to be accomplished.

- 4) **Oral and Written Communication Skills**  
Two-thirds of all employers in a recent AACSB survey claim business education places too little emphasis on key aspects of management, particularly communication skills (Porter and McKibbin 1988). This criticism may be even more critical today, since many employers believe their employees must know how to speak and write effectively to help guide organizations through the increasing ambiguity and uncertainty present in most business environments.
- 5) **Listening Skills**  
Business employees must learn to listen as never before because organizational and individual success depends upon understanding customers, other employees, partners, suppliers and outsourcers, regulators, and other important publics. Listening includes the ability to hear and comprehend disparate views that arise out of diversity in the workplace, cross-functional integration, globalization, and other forces.
- 6) **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**  
Employees must have the capability to digest vast amounts of information, cull it for relevance to their job, then translate it into useful knowledge for themselves and others in the organization. They especially need the skills to detect and articulate problems when they are unstructured. Employees must also be able to assemble and synthesize information from unrelated sources to solve problems. The importance of these skills is reflected in the words of Giovanni Battista Vico, who said "To know the world, one must construct it" (Schrage 1990).

While it may seem overwhelming to integrate all of these skills into the traditional business school environment, one promising alternative is currently being explored. These skills can be developed effectively through the use of *active learning*, an educational paradigm that involves students in constructing their own learning experiences and exposes them to the collegial patterns present in work situations. When used in the context of a ser-

vices marketing course (which provides new content), active learning offers an educational underpinning for the pivotal work force skills required in business.

Services marketing courses can readily be designed to provide new content and to develop the skills discussed above. The objectives of this article are to

- 1) provide an overview of services marketing course content,
- 2) contrast traditional and emerging educational paradigms and describe the basic pedagogy of active learning,
- 3) demonstrate the appropriateness of active learning for services marketing content, and
- 4) provide examples of active learning exercises designed to address key content areas in services marketing

## THE SERVICES MARKETING COURSE

The services marketing course content we describe in this section is based on a number of assumptions. First, we assume that customer-focused, customer-oriented organizations are the appropriate models for leaders and managers of the future to emulate. Second, we assume that customers desire service quality and service value, and that firms that deliver quality and value will achieve competitive parity (if not competitive advantage) in their industries. Third, we assume that information-based technologies will continue to profoundly affect the nature of services offerings. Fourth, we believe these assumptions apply not only in the United States, but also to much of the global marketplace. Finally, we assume that, due to the characteristics of services (intangibility, heterogeneity, and simultaneous production and consumption), managers of service organizations face unique challenges in delivering quality and value to consumers. Certainly these assumptions can—and probably should—be debated within the classroom setting. However, the course content described here depends on a level of acceptance of these basic premises.

Given these assumptions, the course content is focused on teaching students how to lead and manage successful service organizations by delivering quality services to the marketplace within a dynamic environment (Zeithaml and Bitner 1995). The core of the course is structured around understanding and developing strategies to address four key content areas adapted from the service quality gap model (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1990). These four areas are described below.

### **Understanding Customer Expectations and Perceptions**

The course is based on understanding consumers' expectations and perceptions of services. Students learn how consumers' expectations (the standards of performance against which service experiences are compared) are formed, how they change, and what firms can do to influence expectations. They also explore customer perceptions of service quality and how the interactions between customers and firms (service encounters) affect perceived value and quality.

Not knowing what customers expect is often a key cause of a firm's failure to deliver service quality. Students need to learn the appropriate research tools for understanding both customers' service expectations and approaches for understanding and managing current customer relationships.

### **Specifying Service Standards and Offerings**

A recurring theme in service organizations is the difficulty experienced in translating customer expectations into service concepts, service designs, and specific standards for service delivery. The intangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability of services makes these tasks particularly challenging. Students learn to develop customer-defined (rather than company-defined) service standards, to understand the role of service leaders, and to apply specific tools (for example, service blueprinting) for designing and posi-

tioning intangibles in order to address these critical issues.

### **Delivering Service**

Even when guidelines exist for performing services well and treating customers correctly, high quality service performance is not a certainty. To address this problem, students need to learn about human resource issues in service firms. These include selecting service-oriented people, designing strategies for empowering service workers, and implementing training programs and reward structures linked to service quality. Understanding the impact of intermediaries and defining the role of customers in creating service outcomes are also critical issues in delivering quality service.

### **Communicating with Customers**

Promises made by a service organization through its advertising, sales force, and other forms of communication may potentially raise customer expectations beyond what can actually be delivered. Students explore how pricing, physical evidence, service guarantees, and other forms of communication (as well as the nature of the interfunctional communication between marketing and operations groups) can have a significant effect on customer expectations of service quality.

Through exposure to the frameworks and strategies that relate to the four core areas described above, we believe students will have the substantive content they need to lead and manage effective service organizations. Throughout the course, they are learning critical new content and ways of viewing traditional marketing content that will be required by effective leaders of the future.

The content of the services marketing course also provides a particularly conducive setting for learning critical skills identified in the introduction to this article. The development of the field of services marketing and many of its concepts have been cross-functional from the outset (Fisk, Brown, and Bitner 1993; Berry and Parasuraman 1993).

Many of the issues in services marketing have multiple roots and multiple solutions that span traditional functional boundaries. Thus, by studying the content of the services marketing course, students gain an appreciation for cross-functional influences and interdependencies. For example, it is simply not possible to understand the design and delivery of service offerings without developing some understanding of disciplines such as operations and human resources, which are outside the traditional boundaries of the marketing function. By learning about the challenges of delivering service offerings in real time (frequently through interpersonal interactions between customers and frontline employees), students quickly begin to see the relevance of teamwork and effective “servant” leadership.

Most students are inherently interested in services marketing because of their personal experiences as service consumers and providers. Thus an active learning approach can be integrated very effectively into a services marketing course, since students’ past services experiences allow them to construct new knowledge fairly easily based on existing cognitive structures. Active learning is highly effective for teaching both the content of services marketing and the workplace skills desired by students and their future employers. This educational paradigm is described in more detail below.

### **THE ACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH**

A general trend in higher education is toward the use of more active, participatory, and collaborative techniques in the classroom. These approaches share mutual goals, such as promoting active learning, bridging the distance between students and teachers, creating a sense of community, and ensuring that knowledge is created rather than transferred (Cottell and Millis 1994). Many studies have been done on the benefits of active learning at the university level. (See Johnson and Johnson 1993 for results of a metaanalysis of studies using college students as subjects.) In general, the results of these studies lead to

similar conclusions: students learn more when they are active participants in creating knowledge; students learn what they practice; and students’ performance generally rises to meet high but attainable goals set by instructors (Cross 1987).

Integration of active learning methods into the classroom signals a paradigm shift in college teaching. Many universities have realized that preparing students for the increasingly complex workplace environment takes more than minor modifications in current teaching practices. It requires a break with the traditional ways of thinking about education (the “passive learning” paradigm) and a willingness to explore a whole new approach to instruction (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991). Exploring the paradigm that has been the traditional foundation for university education improves understanding of the new active learning approach that is emerging. Both the traditional and the new educational paradigms are described below.

### **The Traditional Educational Paradigm**

The prevailing paradigm of college teaching in the United States is based on John Locke’s assumption that untrained student minds were like blank pages waiting for the instructor to fill them with wisdom (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991). This philosophy, which gained popularity in the nineteenth century, viewed the mind as an empty slate rather than a muscle that needed exercising through constant challenge. The concept of schooling as repeated drills and lectures comes out of this assumption, and it was very deeply imbedded in educational practice by the turn of the century (Graham 1992b).

In the early 1900s, universities began to focus on the advancement of knowledge through research. Knowledge creation through the development and empirical testing of theory was viewed as the primary driver of human progress. Teaching and service, which had been the focus of higher education, were de-emphasized in the interest of conducting research and publishing results. As teaching became less central to the

activities of universities, the assumption was that anyone who had a Ph.D. was qualified to teach (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991). The idea that those who know can teach, coupled with the notion of students as empty containers into which instructors pour their wisdom, has led to the “passive” educational paradigm that prevails in most university settings today. These assumptions have caused faculty to think of teaching in the following way (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991).

- 1) Faculty “transfer” knowledge to students, who are expected to memorize and recall it.
- 2) Students are passive receptacles to be filled with information that is “owned” by the faculty.
- 3) Faculty are responsible for sorting and classifying students into appropriate categories by assigning grades—often based on a statistically derived “curve.”
- 4) Relationships between faculty and students are impersonal and interchangeable (based on the Taylor model of industrial organizations that was popular at the turn of the century).
- 5) Students operate in a competitive environment where the goal is to outperform their classmates (and where faculty also work to outdo their colleagues.)

These educational assumptions and practices have been largely unchallenged until recently. The students who were products of this system seemed able to meet the needs of American businesses, whose hierarchical business structures mirrored the prevailing educational model. As our world grows increasingly more complex, however, our universities have not adapted to the new environment. (Several reports criticize the failure of universities to involve students actively in the learning process: AAC 1985; Bok 1986; Boyer 1987; NIE 1984.) Business schools in particular have been criticized for failing to prepare graduates for the rapid changes and the new types of skills necessary to cope with today’s diverse and global business environments (AECC 1990; Cottell and Millis 1994; Greising 1989; Nicastro and Jones 1994).

In response to these criticisms, some business schools have begun to focus on both teaching quality and instructional methods. With increasing frequency, business instructors are using cases, simulations, and team assignments to improve students’ communication skills and to make course material more closely related to organizational reality. This trend toward active, participatory, and collaborative learning methods is representative of a general trend in higher education that may be rooted in recent reports indicating that students must be actively involved and engaged in the learning process in order to experience intellectual growth (Goodsell, Maher, and Tinto 1992; Graham 1992b; Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991; Light 1992; NIE 1984; Nicastro and Jones 1994; Smith and MacGregor 1992).

### **The New Educational Paradigm**

The current trend toward more active, participatory learning actually can be traced back to Socrates in ancient Greece. Socrates’ method of education consisted of a dialogue with students where he asked a question and the student responded. The philosopher then used that response to formulate more questions for the student, who was always actively involved in the process (Graham 1992a).

More recently, American educators like John Dewey (the prevailing opponent of John Locke’s theories in the early 1900s) argued that students learn from experience. He believed people become engaged with ideas that interest them and learn through that process of engagement (Graham 1992a). While Dewey made his arguments on the basis of ideology and philosophy, educators today can also refer to scientific research that supports the validity of the active learning approach. For example, the work of psychologist Jerome Bruner at Harvard’s Center for Cognitive Studies in the 1950s and 1960s increased our understanding of how humans learn and cast doubt on the model of the brain as an empty slate. Further evidence has come from experience with training in both businesses and the military. In these settings, the best results



come from getting people actively involved as soon as possible and providing them with lots of coaching along the way (Graham 1992a).

Academic institutions have also been conducting research that demonstrates the effectiveness of the active learning paradigm. Harvard University recently concluded a major study that surveyed both faculty and students about teaching and learning on the Harvard campus. Their findings highlight the importance of active involvement, collaboration with others, and the need to develop effective communication skills (Light 1992).

College teaching is changing in response to this new information, as well as to external pressures to produce students who will be better prepared for the demands of the twenty-first century. The new paradigm, which is based on theory and research about how students learn, requires a shift in focus from the traditional approach. It requires faculty to think of learning as an active rather than a passive activity that must be supported in the following way (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991).

- 1) Faculty are facilitators who create an environment within which students can discover, construct, and transform knowledge by processing it through existing cognitive structures and then retain it in long-term memory, where it

is available for further processing and reconstruction.

- 2) Students actively construct their own knowledge. Learning is something that a learner does, rather than something that is done to a learner.
- 3) Faculty effort is directed at enhancing students' competencies and talents. This requires adopting a "cultivate and develop" philosophy, rather than an emphasis on "select and weed out" (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991, p. 1:8). Faculty help create environments in which the development of student and faculty talent is of primary importance (Astin 1985).
- 4) Education is seen as a social process that can only occur through interpersonal interaction between students and faculty. Individuals must cooperate and communicate to construct shared understandings and knowledge. The role of faculty is to foster an atmosphere that encourages students to build caring and committed relationships within the learning environment.

The new paradigm obviously differs substantially from the traditional approach. (See Exhibit 1 for a comparison of the old and new paradigms of education.) Teaching in the brave new world of education requires that faculty understand some of the mechanics of

**EXHIBIT 1**  
**A COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL AND NEW TEACHING PARADIGMS**

	<b>Traditional Paradigm (Passive Learning Approach)</b>	<b>New Paradigm (Active Learning Approach)</b>
Knowledge	Transferred from faculty to students	Jointly constructed by students and faculty
Students	Passive containers to be filled with faculty's knowledge	Active constructors, discoverers, transformers of own knowledge
Faculty Role	Classify and sort students	Develop students' competencies and talents
Relationships	Impersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students	Personal interactions among students and between faculty and students
Activity Type	Competitive and individualistic learning activities	Mixture of individual and cooperative learning activities
Assumptions	Any expert can teach	Teaching is complex and requires considerable training

Source: Adapted from Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991).



active learning so they can begin to incorporate them into their classrooms and curricula.

### **What Is Active Learning?**

Active learning embodies the philosophies of the new educational paradigm described above. The underlying assumption is that the student is the worker, while the teacher is the coach. "Teacher talk" is replaced or supplemented by student research, oral presentations, team projects, and class debates or discussions. Instructors give up their complete control over the flow of information (in the form of predesigned lectures) and preside over students who are actively creating and presenting their own knowledge. The resulting process is not as neat and orderly as a traditional classroom, since the creation of knowledge is always a messy process that requires time and revision (Graham 1992b), and because students will often come up with questions that are new to the instructor, they get the opportunity to learn together with the teacher. The rationale behind this approach is twofold: first, students are actively involved in constructing their own learning experiences; and second, they are exposed to the exploratory, collegial patterns present in adult learning (particularly in work situations).

All of this lends itself well to the business school setting because corporations are demanding students who can work well in teams without "bosses," who are good communicators, and who can listen to and understand the perspectives of others. Business schools have been incorporating more active learning methods into their curricula recently. Examples of commonly used techniques include case study discussion, role-playing, simulation, individual exercise/class discussion, and cooperative/collaborative learning activities. While all of these activities encourage active student involvement, cooperative learning exercises are particularly useful in business school settings because of their emphasis on teamwork and communication skills.

Cooperative learning involves small groups in which students work together to

maximize their own and each other's learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1990) describe five basic elements that must be present for the activity to be cooperative: (1) positive interdependence among students, (2) student-to-student interaction that promotes learning, (3) individual accountability, (4) emphasis on developing social skills, and (5) group assessment of positive or negative group interaction. Cooperative learning groups can be structured formally or informally, depending on the teaching objectives for a specific assignment.

Formal learning groups have fixed memberships, and the size and composition of the groups is typically set by the instructor. These groups have a well-defined task that may take from several days to a whole semester to complete. In formal cooperative learning groups, the teacher acts as a coach or mentor who is creating knowledge together with the students. Specific tasks for the instructor include teaching the academic concepts, principles, and strategies that the students are to master and apply; assigning the task that the students are to complete cooperatively; monitoring the functioning of the learning group and intervening when necessary to teach collaborative skills or academic content; and evaluating student learning (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991).

Informal learning groups are temporary, ad hoc groups that last for only a single discussion or a class period. Instructors can use these groups to set a mood in the classroom that is conducive to learning and to focus student attention on the material being covered. Informal groups can also help ensure that students are actively involved in processing course material and that learning is personalized. These groups are also useful in identifying misunderstandings or gaps in students' comprehension of course content. Informal groups can be interspersed with lecture material during a single class, or they can be used as the format for the entire period (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991).

A myriad of learning structures exist within both the informal and formal cooperative learning approaches. Each structure has

a specified format and a name (for example, team investigations, pairs interview/pairs compare, formulate–listen–share–create, structured controversy, jigsaw, trade-a-problem, and simultaneous sharing). In addition, there are general approaches that can be applied within any of the structures to ensure group participation and individual accountability. An example of this is “talking chips,” which forces everyone in a group to speak before anyone else can speak again. Another technique, called “numbered heads,” encourages each group member to take responsibility for the final product, since a “group reporter” is selected randomly (based on a preassigned number) to report to the whole class following the group exercise. These activities can easily be adapted for use in a wide variety of classroom settings. (See Kagan 1992 for a comprehensive description of cooperative structures, formats, and discussion techniques.)

Given the wide range of possibilities for active learning approaches and formats, we can provide only a sampling of how they can be applied in a services marketing course. The next section provides a selection of active learning applications, as well as exercises that address the four content areas for services marketing discussed earlier.

### **APPLYING ACTIVE LEARNING IN A SERVICES MARKETING COURSE**

As indicated in the preceding section, group learning formats run the gamut from formal, long-term, team assignments to three-minute, in-class, pair discussions. It is possible to incorporate the full spectrum of active learning techniques into a services marketing course. Choice of specific activities will depend on the particular topic and lesson objectives.

For example, we frequently use a semester-long, formal learning group project that allows M.B.A. students to apply services marketing concepts and approaches in a real business setting. Companies interested in participating are recruited prior to the beginning of the semester, and teams of four

students begin working with the organization almost immediately. The final project is a services marketing audit for a particular branch, service, or service line of the organization that analyzes everything from the service process to contact employee training and motivation to pricing of the service. Students present the project (including recommendations) in writing and in a team presentation to the class and invited members of the organization. Through this comprehensive project, students work with all four content areas and practice all of the skills described in the first two sections of the article. In order to work most effectively, the project structure should follow the five guidelines mentioned earlier for cooperative group efforts. Positive interdependence will be attained if the group is responsible via their grade for the written product and presentation, but a group assessment of each member’s contributions should also be incorporated to encourage individual accountability for the group’s efforts and outcomes.

At the other group learning extreme, short (three to five minute), in-class paired discussions of a focused question can also be used effectively in a services marketing class. For example, the instructor could ask students to discuss with a partner the reasons why service delivery might fail to meet customer expectations and then call randomly on individuals to offer input from their paired discussions. Paired discussions are useful for both involving students and giving students a change of pace during a lecture session.

Active learning is not restricted to group activities. It also applies to individual work that motivates students to create their own knowledge. An individual project that we have used effectively is the services encounter journal. Students are asked to keep a journal of their own personal service encounters throughout the semester and to analyze their positive and negative reactions. One outcome of the journals is that students become much more keenly aware of the elements of service and their own reactions as consumers. The journals can also be used for focused in-class exercises to illustrate a

variety of points being made during the semester.

Exhibit 2 provides four specific examples of active learning exercises that can be used in a services marketing course. The exhibit is designed to illustrate the services marketing content addressed by the exercise according to the four broad content areas discussed earlier: understanding customer expectations and perceptions, specifying service standards and offerings, delivering service, and communicating with customers. We have provided one exercise per content area, but many more options exist that would address other issues or questions within each general category (see Wright, Zeithaml, and Bitner 1995). In addition to the content learned from each exercise, we have also indicated the workplace skills that students will practice as they participate in the exercises. These skills are the ones identified in the opening section of the article as critical for workplace success in the future. Between the content and skills columns on the exhibit we have described the specific subject matter focus of the exercise, as well as the exercise structure and the activities in which the students engage.

#### **AREAS AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SKILLS**

The first exercise in Exhibit 2 uses a structured controversy format (similar to a debate in some ways) to allow students to explore the question, "Is the customer always right?" While the answer to this question is frequently assumed to be "yes," interesting

positioning services. When students actually try to construct a blueprint, they begin to understand the complexities of service design and better appreciate the usefulness of the blueprinting approach. They also experience firsthand the diversity of viewpoints their teammates bring to the exercise, and they must learn to listen and compromise in order to produce a final group product.

The third exercise uses the service encounter journals described above to focus students on frontline employee behaviors and what can or should be done to ensure effective service delivery at the point of contact. The students analyze their own experiences as consumers and apply frameworks from the course to construct strategies for service delivery improvements.

The final exercise in Exhibit 2 uses a more complex exercise design (the jigsaw) to motivate team learning and the construction of a team product—a service guarantee and new service introduction plan. This exercise promotes cross-functional communication, as well as an understanding of how to effectively communicate and guarantee service features to customers.

Each of the first three exercises can be conducted informally during a single class period with relatively little preparation of materials on the part of the instructor. The fourth exercise requires more effort on the part of both faculty and students. The instructor must prepare appropriate hand-out materials before the start of the exercise. Once under way, this activity extends over more than one class period and usually re-

dimensions can be explored to give students a much deeper appreciation of this basic tenet of marketing. (For example, companies may need to consider broader societal issues when deciding how to address specific consumer needs.) The structured controversy exercise allows students to struggle with the issue of whether customer expectations can or should be met in all cases.

The second exercise addresses the content area of specifying service standards and offerings. It emphasizes service blueprinting, a deceptively simple tool for designing and

quires student teams to meet outside of class.

The active learning exercises described above and in Exhibit 2 are not meant to completely replace other teaching techniques. Instead, they should be used in conjunction with other learning activities like short lectures, lectures with whole class discussions, video cases, case analyses, and guest speakers.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Specific content, such as a services marketing course, and active learning processes

**EXHIBIT 2**  
**ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES FOCUSING ON SERVICES MARKETING CONTENT AREAS**  
**AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SKILLS**

Services Marketing Content Area <sup>a</sup>	<b>Understanding Customer Expectations and Perceptions</b>
Subject Matter Focus of Exercise	<p><i>Examining the assumption that the customer is always right by exploring the meaning of the idea.</i></p> <p>The topic helps students explore both consumer expectations of services and service management's perceptions of their expectations. The exercise also illustrates that a service business may purposely choose not to meet the expectations of certain customer groups.</p>
Exercise Structure	<p><i>Structured Controversy</i></p> <p>The basic form includes these steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The instructor assigns article/material that illustrates opposing views on an issue;</li> <li>2) The instructor divides class into pairs;</li> <li>3) Each pair discusses how to argue its position;</li> <li>4) Each pair joins with another with the same view to help each other;</li> <li>5) Each pair makes its argument to a pair with the opposing view; and</li> <li>6) Opposing pairs drop their adversarial roles and work to reach consensus.</li> </ol>
Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The instructor chooses several articles that present opposing views of customer demands (for example, "King Customer" [Phillips and Dunkin 1990], "Putting the Customer First" [Carlzon 1991], "Customers from Hell" [Zemke and Anderson 1990], "The Clients That Exasperate Madison Avenue" [Bird 1993], and "The Flip Side of Customer Service" [Feuer 1987]).</li> <li>2) At the beginning of the class period, each student is paired with another who has read the same article. The pairs discuss their article and decide on a strategy for arguing their position on the question, "Is the customer always right?"</li> <li>3) Each pair then joins another pair with a similar position. These groups of four exchange information and together develop a more effective argument.</li> <li>4) The groups split back into pairs. Each pair is then teamed with another pair with the opposite position. The opposing pairs make their arguments to each other.</li> <li>5) The groups of four then drop their adversarial roles and work together to develop a position regarding customers that both pairs can accept.</li> </ol>
Workplace Skills <sup>b</sup>	<p>Teamwork and team building [2]  Oral and written communication [4]  Listening [5]  Critical thinking [6]</p> <p>The exercise also explores issues related to customer and service manager perceptions. The activity forces students to listen to the opinions of others to improve their initial arguments and eventually to develop a common position with a pair representing an opposing view.</p>

*Continued...*

can be incorporated into marketing curricula to improve the viability of business education. Such content is able to address existing gaps in business content, and the active learning paradigm prepares students for the increasingly complex workplace environment better than the traditional educational paradigm. Working from the basic pedagogy of active

learning, a wide variety of exercises can be designed to address key content areas in services marketing.

In using the active learning paradigm, faculty must help create a culture that allows collaborative activities to be effective—just as leaders in corporations must establish a culture that supports employees through the un-

**EXHIBIT 2, Continued**  
**ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES FOCUSING ON SERVICES MARKETING CONTENT AREAS**  
**AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SKILLS**

Services Marketing Content Area <sup>a</sup>	Specifying Service Standards and Offerings
Subject Matter Focus of Exercise	<p><i>Service blueprinting: The way service expectations are turned into actual service concepts and designs.</i></p> <p>One of the primary tools for designing services is the service blueprint, a deceptively simple idea. Until students actually try designing a blueprint themselves, even for a basic service, they do not appreciate the challenges or complexities.</p>
Exercise Structure	<p><i>Formulate–Share–Listen–Create</i></p> <p>This exercise is one of many variations that requires students to think individually about a problem, question, or specific assigned task and then share their response, whether with another person (pairs) or a group of students (team sharing). Through discussion of individual thoughts, the pair or team then creates a group response to the assignment.</p>
Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Formulate Stage.</b> As homework prior to class, students are assigned basic reading on service blueprinting (for example, text material and/or Shostack 1984, 1987; Kingman–Brundage 1989). They are also given a short article on or description of a relatively simple service. One such frequently used describes a diet meal delivery service that contracts with customers to deliver three ready-to-eat meals a day. Students are told to bring a blueprint of the simple service described.</li> <li>2) <b>Share and Listen Stages.</b> After a brief lecture on service blueprinting, students meet in groups to discuss their individual blueprints. These groups can share and listen first in pairs and then as a full team of four, or they can go directly into a team discussion.</li> <li>3) <b>Create Stage.</b> The group is charged with the task of synthesizing its ideas and drawing a team blueprint on an overhead transparency.</li> <li>4) <b>Following team discussions and creation of the blueprints,</b> the professor calls on a spokesperson from each group in turn to present and explain the group's blueprint.</li> </ol>
Workplace Skills <sup>b</sup>	<p>Cross-functional integration [1]  Teamwork and team building [2]  Oral and written communication [4]  Listening [5]  Critical thinking and problem solving [6]</p> <p>Students also learn how to develop a services blueprint. Because no two blueprints will be the same, they experience first-hand the different thought processes of their teammates.</p>

*Continued...*

certainty and change they face at work. In education, as well as in the workplace, several key issues must be addressed. First, faculty must create an environment where all students, not just the highest performers, feel respected and valued. Second, faculty must transfer the responsibility of learning to the students themselves (a hand off parallel to that required for empowerment to be effective in organizations). Professors also need to promote a relaxed environment

where learning can be fun and where class activities are not driven by the clock. Next, educators need to revisit material throughout the course—create, revisit, and reconstruct with additional information—just as employees need to continue building upon learning to improve their work products. Finally, good work must be rewarded consistently and creatively to motivate students to become ever more skilled and self-confident.

**EXHIBIT 2, Continued**  
**ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES FOCUSING ON SERVICES MARKETING CONTENT AREAS**  
**AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SKILLS**

Services Marketing Content Area <sup>a</sup>	Delivering Service
Subject Matter Focus of Exercise	<p><i>Contact employee behaviors in service encounters.</i></p> <p>By analyzing their own experiences as service consumers, and recording them in service journals, students become incredibly involved in understanding customer perceptions of service and the influence of service employee behavior on customer satisfaction. The journals can also be used to illustrate other aspects of the course content throughout the semester and are an excellent vehicle for actively involving students with the material.</p>
Exercise Structure	<p><i>Pair Interview / Pairs Compare</i></p> <p>Pair discussions, pair problem solving, and pair interviews are common techniques in active learning. Students work in teams to discuss a topic, solve a discrete problem, or interview each other. In the exercise shown, students interview each other about information in their personal service encounter journals. After the pair interviews, two pairs are matched to form groups of four. Within the groups, the pairs compare what they found in their interviews. A group task keeps the <i>pairs compare</i> portion of the exercise focused.</p>
Activity	<p>As an ongoing assignment throughout the semester, students keep service encounter journals in which they record their personal service experiences. Each journal entry reflects one discrete encounter and a structured form is used to record information about the encounter (see Bitner, Booms, and Tetrault 1990 for the structure).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) For the in-class exercise, students bring their journals to class and work in pairs interviewing each other about an ideal, or very satisfying, encounter, and then about a very bad, or dissatisfying, encounter. In addition to describing the two types of encounters they ask the following: Why was the encounter so special (bad)? What did the employee do? Did the employee or firm exceed or fall short of your expectations? How? Using the Bitner, Booms, and Tetrault categorization for service encounters, how would you categorize this one within the three major groups? For an ideal encounter, what could the organization do to ensure that this kind of encounter is the rule, rather than the exception? For a bad encounter, what <i>should</i> the employee have done? (As students interview their teammates, they record the answers to the questions on the interview form provided by the instructor.)</li> <li>2) The exercise can conclude at this point, with students turning in their interview sheets (to ensure individual participation and accountability, not necessarily to be graded), or the exercise can continue, with pairs forming groups of four to discuss and compare. Within the group, students each report on one of the encounter stories they recorded. From the four reported encounters, the group chooses the best illustration of either an ideal or a very bad encounter. Using "numbered heads" or another method for randomly choosing group reporters, the instructor then calls on one person from each group to report the group's incident to the full class. Individual interview sheets are turned in at the end of class.</li> </ol>
Workplace Skills <sup>b</sup>	<p>Cross-functional integration [1]  Oral and written communication [4]  Listening [5]  Critical thinking and problem solving [6]</p> <p>Through the observation and journal recording of students' own personal experiences, many skills are enhanced. Through the in-class exercise, students practice skills in interviewing a partner and in repeating/rephrasing what the partner says on the interview sheets. By discussing how to make the encounters ideal, they develop and apply relevant human resource issues and see the links between human resources and customer satisfaction.</p>

*Continued...*

**EXHIBIT 2, Continued**  
**ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES FOCUSING ON SERVICES MARKETING CONTENT AREAS**  
**AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SKILLS**

Services Marketing Content Area <sup>a</sup>	<b>Communicating with Customers</b>
Subject Matter Focus of Exercise	<p><i>Importance of managing customer expectations by understanding what can realistically be promised.</i></p> <p>Organizations often overpromise because different functions—sales, advertising, operations, marketing research—focus almost totally on their own information, objectives, and deadlines. As a result, services are not provided as promised. Customer expectations are not met, and loyalty and repeat patronage may be lost.</p>
Exercise Structure	<p><i>Jigsaw</i></p> <p>Designed to place students in situations of extreme interdependence, this structure gives each student only part of the needed learning materials, which he or she is then responsible for teaching to the team. Jigsaw exercises have specially designed materials, teams and team training, expert groups, and individual or team rewards.</p>
Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Students are assigned one of four functional areas of a service organization: sales, advertising, marketing research, or operations. Initially, they meet within these “expert groups,” which are provided with material about an upcoming service introduction, but only from their functional perspective.</li> <li>2) Expert groups master the material together, then go to their “work unit teams.”</li> <li>3) Work unit teams have one member from each expert group. The work unit’s goal is to pool all information from individual functions to come up with an introduction date for the service, a service guarantee that details the service features, and an estimate of the number of new customers that will be using the service per week.</li> <li>4) Work unit teams must come to a consensus on a plan but must also accurately represent their expert area, so grading is based on both a group and individual score. The work unit score (team bonus or group grade) is for the feasibility of the plan. The individual score (pay increase or grade) reflects the way the expert group evaluates effectiveness. If a plan is outside the bounds of feasibility, no individual receives a pay increase.</li> </ol>
Workplace Skills <sup>b</sup>	<p>Cross-functional integration [1]  Teamwork and team building [2]  Oral and written communication [4]  Listening [5]  Critical thinking and problem solving [6]</p> <p>Through this exercise, students recognize the conflicting objectives that arise when different functions are involved in providing service. In cooperating, they develop a plan that requires them to compromise to create a successful service.</p>

<sup>a</sup> Refer to the four major content areas described earlier.

<sup>b</sup> Numbered workplace skills refer to the six major skill areas most critical for employees, as described earlier.

*Note:* These and other active learning exercises are explained in more detail in Wright, Bitner, and Zeithaml (1995, forthcoming).

In conclusion, we believe the necessary skills are teachable. By integrating the new content and process described in this article into our business school curricula, we can prepare our students to be effective managers and leaders in the increasingly challenging workplace.

## References

- AAC (1985). *Integrity in the Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges.
- AECC (1990). *AECC Urges Priority for Teaching in College Education*. Issues Statement no. 1. Torrance, CA: Accounting Education Change Commission.



- Astin, A. (1985). *Achieving Educational Excellence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Berry, Leonard L., and A. Parasuraman (1993). "Building a New Academic Field—The Case of Services Marketing." *Journal of Retailing*, 69 (1): 13–60.
- Bird, Laura (1993). "The Clients That Exasperate Madison Avenue." *Wall Street Journal*, 22 November: B1.
- Bitner, Mary Jo, Bernard H. Booms, and Mary Stanfield Tetreault (1990). "The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents." *Journal of Marketing*, January: 71–84.
- Bok, E. (1986). *Higher Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship Revisited*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Byrne, John A. (1993). "The Horizontal Corporation." *Business Week*, 20 December: 76–81.
- Carlzon, Jan (1991). "Putting the Customer First: The Key to Services Strategy." Reprinted in *Services Marketing*, by Christopher H. Lovelock, as excerpted in the *McKinsey Quarterly*, Summer, 1987. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pp. 406–23. Excerpted from *Moments of Truth*, by Jan Carlzon, Ballinger Publishing, 1987.
- Cottell, Philip G., and Barbara J. Millis (1994). *Financial Accounting: Information for Decisions*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.
- Cross, K.P. (1987). "Teaching for Learning." *AAHE Bulletin*, 39 (8): 2–6.
- Feuer, Dale (1987). "The Flip Side of Customer Service." *Training*, January: 8.
- Fisk, Raymond P., Stephen W. Brown, and Mary Jo Bitner (1993). "Tracking the Evolution of the Services Marketing Literature." *Journal of Retailing*, 69 (1): 61–103.
- Goodsell, Anne, Michelle Maher, and Vincent Tinto (1992). *Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education*. University Park, PA: National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment.
- Graham, Ellen (1992a). "Dewey Disciple." *Wall Street Journal*, 11 September: B1, B4.
- Graham, Ellen (1992b). "Digging for Knowledge." *Wall Street Journal*, 11 September: B4.
- Greising, D. (1989). "Chicago's B-School Goes Touchy-Feely." *Business Week*, 27 November: 140.
- Huey, John (1994). "The New Post-Heroic Leadership." *Fortune*, 21 February: 42–50.
- Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson (1993). "What We Know about Cooperative Learning at the College Level." *Cooperative Learning*, Spring: 17–18.
- Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and E. Holubec (1990). *Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith (1991). *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Kagan, Spencer (1992). *Cooperative Learning*. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning.
- Kingman-Brundage, Jane (1989). "The ABCs of Service System Blueprinting." In *Designing a Winning Service Strategy*, edited by Mary Jo Bitner and Lawrence A. Crosby. Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 30–33.
- Light, Richard (1992). *The Harvard Assessment Seminars: Second Report*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Louis, M.R. (1990). "The Gap in Management Education." *Selections: The Magazine of the Graduate Management Admissions Council*, Winter: 1–12.
- Magnet, Myron (1994). "The New Golden Rule of Business." *Fortune*, 21 February: 60–64.
- Nicastro, Mary L., and David C. Jones (1994). *Cooperative Learning Guide for Marketing Teaching Tips for Marketing Instructors*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- NIE (1984). *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- O'Reilly, Brian (1994). "Re-engineering the MBA." *Fortune*, 24 January: 38–47.
- Phillips, Steven, and Amy Dunkin (1990). "King Customer." *Business Week*, 12 March: 88–94.
- Porter, L.W., and L.E. McKibbin (1988). *Management Education and Development: Drift or Thrust into the 21st Century?* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Shostack, G. Lynn (1984). "Designing Services That Deliver." *Harvard Business Review*, January–February: 133–39.
- (1987). "Service Positioning through Structural Change." *Journal of Marketing*, 51 (1): 34–43.
- Schrage, Michael (1990). *Shared Minds: The New Technologies of Collaboration*. New York: Random House.
- Smith, Barbara L., and Jean T. MacGregor (1992). "What Is Collaborative Learning?" In *Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education*, by Anne Goodsell, Michelle Maher, and Vincent Tinto. University Park, PA: National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, pp. 9–22.
- Wright, Lauren K., Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Mary Jo Bitner (1995). *Services Marketing: An Active Learning Resource Guide for Instructors*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill (forthcoming).
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., and Mary Jo Bitner (1995). *Services Marketing*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill (forthcoming).
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., A. Parasuraman, and Leonard L. Berry (1990). *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Zemke, Ron, and Kristin Anderson (1990). "Customers from Hell." *Training*, January: 26–33.

# Experiential Learning Exercises in Services Marketing Courses

Dwayne D. Gremler, K. Douglas Hoffman, Susan M. Keaveney, and Lauren K. Wright

---

*Business schools are often accused of focusing too much on quantitative and technical skills and spending too little time on interpersonal and communication skills. Experiential learning assignments provide an effective vehicle for addressing these concerns and are particularly well suited for services marketing courses. The objective of this article is to present a portfolio of experiential learning exercises that can be used in services marketing courses to facilitate the integration of course concepts, teamwork and team building, communication and listening skills, and critical thinking and problem solving.*

---

The best thing for being sad is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. . . . Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the thing for you.

—T. H. White (1939, p. 183),  
*The Once and Future King*

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In *The Once and Future King*, the magician Merlyn counsels young King Arthur on the power inherent in learning. The novel contains a fascinating description of the lessons Merlyn arranges for Arthur so that he can truly experience what he will need to know in his future role as the leader of England. (This is experiential learning in the extreme since Merlyn transforms Arthur into an ant, a hawk, and various other creatures to gain the firsthand knowledge that he will need to be a great king.)

While university professors are not typically charged with schooling future kings, we do have the important task of preparing our students for careers in a rapidly changing, highly competitive workplace. Business schools have recently been accused of focusing almost exclusively on quantitative and technical abilities while spending too little time on interpersonal and communication skills (Louis 1990; O'Reilly 1994). While individual quantitative and technical abilities continue to be valued by organizations, the contemporary business environment demands additional skills such as oral and writ-

ten communication, critical thinking/problem solving, and teamwork (Floyd and Gordon 1998). To help students develop these competencies, our classes will need to become increasingly “learner centered” and collaborative (Cunningham 1995; Koch 1997). This will require instructors to “engage learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices” (O'Banion 1997, p. 49).

What do “learner-focused” classes involve? A widely publicized study sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation offers the following seven guidelines for creating a learner-centered environment in higher education (Chickering and Gamson 1987).

1. Encourage student-faculty contact. This is the most critical factor in keeping students motivated and involved. Contact both in and outside of class is very beneficial. Knowing a few faculty members well helps students be more intellectually committed to their academic work and future goals.
2. Encourage cooperation among students. Learning is most effective when it is a team effort—collaborative and social rather than competitive and isolated. Students can develop both listening and critical thinking skills when they share their ideas and listen to those of others.
3. Encourage active learning. Students must actively experience the class material and make it a part of themselves. This does not occur when students simply listen to lectures, memorize information, and take objective exams. Students need to process what they are learning by writing or talking about it and relating it to their other academic and life experiences.
4. Give prompt feedback. Students need timely, constructive feedback on what they are doing well and what they can improve. Class activities and assignments should provide

---

Dwayne D. Gremler is an assistant professor of marketing in the Department of Business, College of Business and Economics, at the University of Idaho. K. Douglas Hoffman is an associate professor of marketing in the Department of Marketing at Colorado State University. Susan M. Keaveney is a professor of marketing at the University of Colorado at Denver. Lauren K. Wright is a professor of marketing in the Department of Marketing at California State University at Chico.

*Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 22 No. 1, April 2000 35-44  
© 2000 Sage Publications, Inc.



ample opportunities for them to perform and receive suggestions for improvement.

5. Emphasize time on task. There is no substitute for spending an appropriate amount of quality time learning course material. Students need help with setting priorities and developing effective time management skills.
6. Communicate high expectations. Expecting more from students will motivate them to do better work. Instructors should be clear about the course expectations, give prompt feedback, and reward good performance.
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning. Students come to college with different learning styles. What works for one student may not be effective for another. Students need the opportunity to learn in diverse ways and to succeed in demonstrating their skills so they will be more receptive to learning skills that do not come as easily for them.

These seven principles can be incorporated into marketing classes through the use of experiential learning activities that help students understand how their own experiences relate to course content. Experiential exercises place considerable responsibility for learning on the student, while the professor takes on the role of coach. This shift from “teaching marketing to helping students learn marketing” represents a major departure from traditional marketing education (Lamont and Friedman 1997, p. 24). It requires professors to give up some control over the flow of information in the class and, instead, preside over students who are “coproducers” in actively creating and presenting their own knowledge (Wright and Lovelock 1999; Wright, Bitner, and Zeithaml 1994). While students take on additional responsibility in the learning process during experiential activities, this does not imply that the instructor has less work to do (Kohn 1993). In fact, evaluating the outcomes of experiential exercises can require a substantial time investment compared to more traditional means of assessing student learning (e.g., multiple-choice exams).

This change in pedagogy may sound overwhelming to those who have not yet tried a more experiential approach to education. However, it can result in some wonderful experiences as teachers and students share the excitement of acting as partners in the classroom. Student comments indicate that they tend to enjoy experiential learning assignments more than any other aspect of the class (O’Hara and Shaffer 1995). And experiential learning activities do effectively address the criticism that business schools focus “too much attention on theories and concepts and not enough attention on communication, decision-making, and other skills that are at least as important to career success as content knowledge” (Lamb, Shipp, and Moncrief 1995, p. 10).

### EXPERIENTIAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

While experiential exercises work well for many marketing topics, they are especially effective in services marketing classes (Hoffman and Bateson 1997; Lovelock and Wright

1999; Wright, Bitner, and Zeithaml 1994). Students are often both service consumers and service employees, and experiential learning activities help them understand how their own experiences relate to the course material and learning objectives. (Table 1 includes a list of the most common course objectives for services marketing classes.) Experiential learning assignments can be integrated into the classroom in many forms. The following activities are a sample of our most effective assignments for undergraduate courses in services marketing.<sup>1</sup> The summaries are brief so that we may present as many exercises as possible. Our experience with these exercises suggests that students’ enthusiasm and cooperation in participating in these activities greatly enhance their understanding of course concepts.

### Exploring Basic Services Concepts

The purpose of this in-class exercise is to help students understand some of the basics of services marketing by applying these concepts to a “real-world” setting. The exercise should take place early in the course (in the third or fourth week, if possible) and can be done in either one or two class periods. Health care is a good service to use. Virtually all students have experience with this service, and it can be delivered in significantly different ways. Although the description of this activity is based on health care, many other services would work equally well (e.g., banking services, coffeehouses, or beauty salons).

At the end of the class period prior to this exercise, the professor hands out a packet of material and asks students to review it before the next class (see Figures 1-4). Typically, the packet includes (1) the Scale of Market Entities (see Shostack 1977), (2) the zone of tolerance (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1993), (3) the core benefit model (Shostack 1977), (4) the continuum of evaluation (Zeithaml 1981), and (5) two business press articles: “Reach Out and Cure Someone” by Purvis (1991) and “The Doctor Is On” by Hafner (1996).

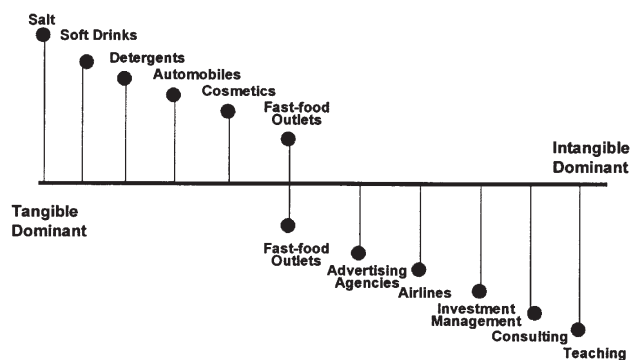
At the beginning of the class period designated for the activity, the students are divided into groups. Each of these groups takes one of the following roles: traditional doctors (with regular office practices) or traditional patients, immediate-care doctors (affectionately known as “doc in the boxes”) or immediate-care patients, and doctors by phone or Web (as described in the two articles contained in the packet) or phone/Web patients. For each of the three types of doctors, the task is the same. Each “doctor” group (traditional, immediate care, and phone/Web) must design a core benefit model for its service. The model should show both the core and key supplementary benefits. Since these models will be shared with the class, they need to be created on overhead transparencies or PowerPoint slides.

The total number of patient groups will depend on the class size and the number of concepts the instructor wants to cover with the exercise (the packet contains the specific concepts—Tangibility Scale, continuum of evaluation, etc.). For

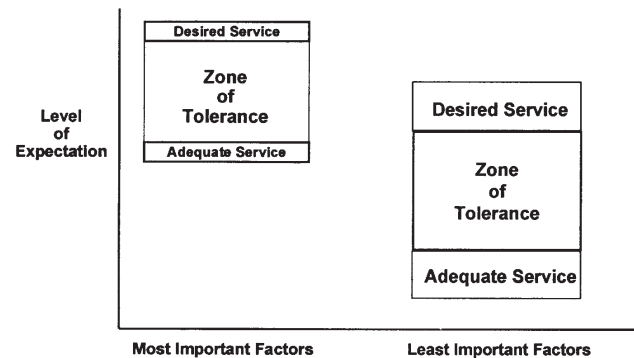
**TABLE 1**  
**COMMON SERVICES MARKETING COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Developing an understanding of the unique challenges involved in marketing and managing services.
2. Identifying differences between the marketing of services and the marketing of manufactured goods.
3. Identifying and analyzing the various components of the "services marketing mix." This includes the traditional four Ps plus the physical environment, processes, and the people involved in service transactions.
4. Understanding and discussing key issues concerning the managing and measuring of service quality and customer satisfaction.
5. Appreciating the intertwined role of service personnel and customers with respect to service delivery, service failures, and service recovery issues.
6. Discovering the sources of competitive advantage in service businesses.
7. Understanding how "service aspects" of every type of firm can become a competitive advantage.
8. Developing an appreciation for key issues in service organizations such as managing supply and demand, relationship management, and the overlap in marketing, operations management, and human resource systems.
9. Building important workplace skills (e.g., cooperation, teamwork, meeting deadlines, report writing) through team projects and cooperative learning activities.
10. Becoming better, more aware, and maybe less naive service consumers.

SOURCE: Adapted from Hoffman (1997).



**FIGURE 1: Tangibility Spectrum**



**FIGURE 2: Zones of Tolerance for Different Service Dimensions**

example, one set of patient groups will place the kind of medical service received (i.e., traditional, immediate care, or phone/web care) on the continuum of evaluation. Each group will then create lists of the search, experience, and credence attributes patients might use to evaluate the quality of their health care experience.<sup>2</sup> The instructor can assign as many groups to cover different concepts as is necessary to accommodate the class size. The patient groups also need to create overheads to share with the class.

When the groups have finished creating their overheads, the whole class reconvenes. The instructor asks the three "doctor" groups to share their core benefit models and invites the class to comment on the similarities/differences between the three types of service delivery. The "patient" groups then present their work. For example, one set of patient groups shows where they placed their service on the continuum of evaluation and describes the attributes associated with the service. This can lead to an interesting discussion of the differences between the three types of service delivery from the patient's perspective. There should be relatively few search or

experience attributes for the doctors by phone/web (which implies that credence attributes are dominant) compared to the traditional doctors and the immediate-care physicians (who can rely more on search-and-experience attributes to offset the credence characteristics inherent in health care). Questions that can be directed to the whole class after the groups have presented include the following:

1. What do you think of the doctors by phone/web service?
2. Would you use this service? If so, under what circumstances?
3. What might the differences be in the training and skills that the doctors by phone/web might need versus traditional doctors?

One key benefit of this exercise is that students learn to apply theoretical concepts in analyzing service providers in their everyday environment. The group presentations also offer an excellent opportunity for the instructor to correct any misunderstandings that students have about the interpretation and application of the basic services marketing constructs before moving on to more complex topics.

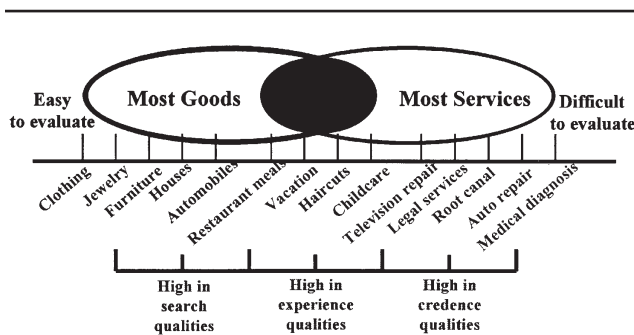


FIGURE 3: Evaluation of Services

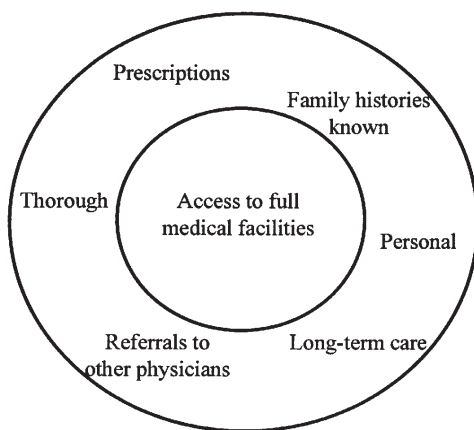


FIGURE 4: Traditional Doctors

### Service Watch Assignment

This assignment encourages students to seek out (i.e., “watch” for) service-related articles in the popular press. The objective of this exercise is to help students realize that many services marketing practitioners routinely deal with the topics presented in the class. Students are asked to locate a current article that addresses a services marketing issue related to class discussions from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, or other publications that are applicable to the course. Students then write a short paper pertaining to the following issues:

1. a brief summary of the key point(s) of the article;
2. a discussion of how this article relates to a key concept examined in this course and the implications for services marketing practitioners; and
3. the student’s personal reaction to the article based on the marketing perspective gained during the course.

In doing this assignment, students are forced to look beyond the textbook to find real-life examples of the concepts

discussed in class. This assignment can be used as a way to begin each class, particularly if due dates for various students are scattered throughout the semester. In particular, a student can be asked to provide a 2-minute summary of the article and discuss the marketing concept illustrated in the article. Once an article has been discussed in class, it is often easy for the instructor to refer back to the article in subsequent discussions.

### Servicescape Video

In this exercise, student teams are asked to “produce” a short video segment (4 to 5 minutes) related to a specific servicescape. The servicescape is the environment where the service is delivered that has the potential to affect the customer’s experience.<sup>3</sup> Although the assignment could include a local business, it probably could be done on most college campuses by looking at such servicescapes as a campus dining hall, a student recreational center, the library, the business building, and so on. Each servicescape segment might address the following questions:

1. What is done well in this servicescape? Use the video to point out specific examples.
2. What are the important issues in designing/maintaining this servicescape so that it will be a positive influence on customer expectations?
3. What part(s) of the servicescape could be improved or altered to positively influence the service experience? Use the video to point out specific examples.
4. Do any of the following characteristics (color, lighting, shapes, sound, smell) influence the customer’s experience? Explain.
5. Which roles (package, facilitator, socializer, differentiator) does this servicescape play? Explain.

Student groups can be assigned completely different services, or several groups may be assigned different aspects of one provider’s servicescape. For example, several student teams could be assigned the university golf course, but each might be responsible for a different aspect of the servicescape (e.g., parking lot, clubhouse, driving range, or the course itself). Alternatively, a different approach might be to make comparisons between providers who essentially provide the same service. In this case, students could compare and contrast the university golf course’s servicescape with (if available) the servicescape of a municipal golf course, a resort golf course, and/or a private country club golf course. Each course is likely to have a very different servicescape, which, in turn, is likely to have a different effect on its customers. Once the video segments have been “produced,” they can be shown to the entire class. Instructors can stop the videos to elaborate on various points and ask the producers questions. A major objective of the assignment is to illustrate how the servicescape can influence the customer’s service experience.



### Physical Evidence Field Trip

The objective of this exercise is to build on the service-scape video exercise by comparing and contrasting two local service providers. This exercise can be used to demonstrate the differences in competitive formulas of two service firms that are providing the same core benefit. Students are typically asked to compare a fast-food franchise (e.g., McDonald's, Wendy's, Hardees, etc.) with a full-service restaurant (e.g., TGI Friday's, Ruby Tuesdays, Bennigan's, etc.). Ideally, two providers located next to each other should be selected to allow students to go easily from one to the other. Students are asked to answer the following questions:

1. For each provider, what is done well in this servicescape? Elaborate and point out specific examples.
2. For each provider, what aspects of this servicescape have a positive influence on customer perceptions of the overall service experience? Similarly, what aspects of this servicescape do not necessarily have a positive influence on customer perceptions of the overall service experience? Explain.
3. Which of the following characteristics (color, lighting, shapes, sound, smell) in each servicescape influences the customer's experience? Explain.
4. What other aspects (besides the servicescape) of physical evidence are present?
5. How does each provider (fast food and full service) use the servicescape as a differentiator? In their positioning strategy? To appeal to their target segment(s)? To facilitate service delivery?
6. How does each provider (fast food and full service) use physical evidence (other than the servicescape) as a differentiator? To enhance the customer's experience? To facilitate service delivery?
7. What suggestions would you make to improve the servicescape and other physical evidence for each provider (fast food and full service)?

A nice way to conclude the activity is to have all of the students come together at the same time at each provider's facility and relate their observations. A discussion about physical evidence is much more vivid when the students actually can observe it and instructors can elaborate easily on observations made by the students. If the field trip is carefully scheduled, the service providers' management may serve as "guest speakers" on physical evidence issues.

### Company Complaint Letter

This exercise is beneficial in examining consumer complaint behavior, service failure points, and service recovery strategies. Students are instructed to write a letter to any company from which they have received bad or at least marginal service. The service encounter does not have to be one that left the student extremely upset; it may be simply that the firm did not supply service that met the student's expectations.

Students are directed to obtain the name and address of the appropriate person to whom they should complain and write a formal letter of complaint.

In the letter, students are asked to complain about what has happened and, if appropriate, make suggestions for any action the company could take to appropriately "recover" in this situation. To eliminate bias, students are specifically asked not to state in the letter that they are doing this as a class project. To give the company a chance to respond by the end of the semester, the letter is mailed early in the course, and responses are discussed near the end of the term. Later in the semester, students are asked to prepare a short (3 to 4 pages, double-spaced) paper analyzing the situation that led to their complaint, the nature of the complaint, what they expected the firm to do, and how they now feel toward the organization. If the firm did respond, students are asked to (1) describe what the response was and (2) discuss the adequacy of the firm's response (from the perspective of a consumer). If the company did not respond, students are instructed to (1) discuss why they think they did not receive a response and (2) write a letter to themselves (on behalf of the company) that addresses what they believe the firm should have done. Finally, students are asked to conclude their papers with a discussion of what they learned from this experience.

At the end of the semester (perhaps on the day the assignment is due), students might be asked to share their experiences with the rest of the class. Most of the time there will be some students who are excited and happy about how a provider responded to their letter, while other students end up very frustrated with the organization they contacted. The instructor can easily incorporate issues related to service recovery into the stories told by students. To extend this idea, students could role-play as different members of the organization that have an interest in this complaint letter (e.g., the customer contact employee, the manager, the attorney, etc.) and discuss what response (in their view) is appropriate. Students might even role-play the original service encounter and explore various recovery strategies to respond to the situation.

### Customers' Roles in Service Delivery

Unlike consumers of goods, service customers often are actively involved in the production process. This assignment highlights the complexities of managing a service operation where customer contact is frequent. Students are instructed to select a service that requires a moderate or high level of customer participation.<sup>4</sup> Students are then asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What service have you selected?
2. Describe your role as a customer in the service delivery.
3. How did you learn your "role"?
4. How important is the customer to the service delivery process?

5. How would you describe your level of participation (low/medium/high)? Explain.
6. What influence do other customers have on your service experience?
7. When might other customers enhance your experience? Diminish your experience?
8. When might you, as the customer, be able to enhance your experience?
9. When might you, as the customer, do something that diminishes your experience?
10. Is this a service that you might be able to provide yourself (without the service provider's assistance)? Why or why not?

This exercise works very well if the questions are passed out prior to the day this discussion occurs in class. Indeed, if students have prepared answers in advance, their level of participation is likely to be quite high. Even those students who normally do not volunteer their opinions in class can be encouraged to participate. Since students are encouraged to choose the services and identify their roles in service delivery, they become “coproducers” of their educational experiences.

### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXERCISES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

While undergraduate students often require numerous short projects or assignments to help clarify and define concepts, graduate students are usually ready to move beyond conceptualization to the issues that arise with operationalization and implementation. Thus, effective assignments for graduate students teach them to apply and implement services marketing concepts in actual business situations. This goal of translating theory into practice can be approached from two general directions. On urban campuses and with part-time graduate programs—where nontraditional students tend to be older, more mature, and have inside access to companies—the assignments can incorporate real consulting opportunities. For more traditional, full-time residential students, exercises can provide a similar business applications learning experience but from a consumer, competitive, or other more external perspective.

#### Consulting-Based Projects

Consulting projects work best when graduate students have completed the graduate business core courses and are well prepared to interact with the business community. Students will typically require assistance with the consulting process and with managing expectations of the client firm.

*Services marketing audit for a nonprofit organization.* In this project, graduate students volunteer to conduct a services marketing audit for a nonprofit organization. The outcome includes articulation and evaluation of the firm's current services marketing practices, identification of both “best practices” and areas for improvement, and detailed recommenda-

tions for future changes. Students may choose to work within a general marketing audit format (cf. Kotler 1997, chap. 24) or may use the services marketing audit developed by Berry, Conant, and Parasuraman (1991). Both of these sources provide a good framework (as well as many questions) for conducting a thorough audit.

A number of benefits accrue from this activity. The graduate students and the college benefit from an opportunity to provide service to the local business community. Students also benefit from the experience of working with organizations whose goals, cultures, structures, and management styles are quite different from the for-profit model to which most students have been exposed. Similarly, not-for-profit managers can benefit from the experiences of working with student consultants trained to approach issues and solutions from a for-profit perspective. Beyond functional business issues of accounting, finance, operations, and marketing, opportunities abound to develop team building, communications, and negotiating skills.

An additional benefit of this project is that it increases the appeal of the services marketing course to nonbusiness graduate students. For example, health care students have enjoyed the opportunity to work on projects, including patient satisfaction and service quality studies for numerous hospitals (e.g., Provident Health Partners, Boulder Community Hospital, Denver General Hospital, Denver Children's Hospital, and many others) as well as other health organizations (e.g., Belle Bonfils Blood Center, Colorado Organ Recovery, National Stroke Association, and the Colorado AIDS Project). Students from other disciplines and backgrounds have enjoyed working with organizations of interest to them. Liberal arts students have worked with businesses such as the Denver Zoo, Denver Art Museum, Colorado Symphony, and Very Special Arts of Colorado; students interested in careers in social services have consulted for Seniors Inc., The Adoption Centre, Big Brothers of Denver, and the Denver Dumb Friends League. Education students have consulted in settings such as the Jefferson County Adult Education program or the Adult Literacy Project, whereas government and public administration students have analyzed the Westminster Library, Dillon Amphitheater, and Colorado Women's Education and Employment.

*Conduct a service quality gap analysis.* Another consulting-based assignment requires students to conduct a complete gap analysis—including managers, contact personnel, and customers—for a client firm. The project is suitable for both for-profit and not-for-profit firms. SERVQUAL and gap analysis survey items are drawn from *Delivering Quality Service* (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1990) and, following Carman (1990), adapted to the needs of the client firm. Some questions may need to be reworded to reflect the firm's industry and services. Other questions are added to gather information unique to the client's needs.



Academic benefits of this project include an in-depth familiarity with the SERVQUAL gaps model, a deeper understanding of some issues involved in implementing the model, and an opportunity to integrate and apply statistical skills in a marketing management context. Some managerial benefits include the observation of SERVQUAL gaps as they actually exist in business settings and the articulation of actual differences between managers', employees', and customers' perceptions of the same service organization.

### Not-for-Consulting-Only Projects

*Blueprinting.* Another nicely defined opportunity to apply services marketing tools to an actual business situation is provided by a blueprinting assignment (Shostack 1986). Blueprinting illustrates the balance of control that is necessary among operations, human resources, and marketing to provide an effective service delivery system. Students get ready for this project by preparing the Shouldice Hospital case.<sup>5</sup> Excellent guidance for blueprinting is provided in the resource guide for Zeithaml and Bitner's (1996) *Services Marketing* text (see Wright, Bitner, and Zeithaml 1997). By completing this exercise, students learn the benefits but also the difficulties and ambiguities involved in creating a service blueprint. This project can be adapted to the traditional, younger, residential students by completing the blueprint from the consumer's viewpoint. The data-driven portion of the blueprint might stop at the "line of visibility," but backstage processes might be recommended by students.

*Best practices.* This exercise requires students to benchmark services marketing practices and procedures within a particular industry or on a particular issue. For example, groups may explore how health, financial, or professional service industries measure service quality and customer satisfaction. Alternately, students might explore a single issue, such as examining how high-priced service providers maintain their price leadership. In this case, students might interview executives from 20 top services firms in a variety of industries (e.g., Disney, Federal Express, PriceWaterhouse, or Vail Associates) to understand a variety of ways that premium pricing strategies are supported.

### CD-ROM Interactive Simulations

Interactive simulation games are popular experiential activities that work in both graduate and undergraduate classes. A simulation called *Building Service, Driving Profits: RGP Financial Services* is particularly relevant for services marketing courses.<sup>6</sup> The simulation allows users to transform their intellectual understanding of services marketing concepts into an operational understanding. It presents the scenario of RGP Financial Services, a business in trouble. Employee and customer satisfaction has been in a downward spiral for 2 years. During this same period, profits as a per-

centage of revenue have declined from about 20% to 10%. The challenge for students is to turn the company around.

The simulation is set up as a five-stage tutorial. The first four stages are presented as orientation sessions that provide background information about the company and that teach students how to implement the strategies they have chosen. Students can control a number of independent variables that include incremental hiring percentages, promotion expenses, starting salaries, raises, layoffs, training expenses, and investments in the service infrastructure. In the final stage, students try to positively influence the dependent variables (customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, cash, and profit as a percentage of revenue) by effectively manipulating the independent variables to design a cohesive marketing strategy.

The primary benefit of the simulation is that it allows students to transform their intellectual understanding of services marketing concepts into an operational understanding of the link between employee and customer satisfaction. The interactive nature of the simulation enhances the realism of the simulation as customers, employees, and members of the board of directors appear on the screen and voice their reactions to the student's strategic decisions.

## DISCUSSION

Our intent in this article has been to provide specific suggestions as to how experiential learning activities might be incorporated into services marketing courses. Table 2 provides a summary of the activities. It is unlikely that instructors would want to incorporate all of these exercises into one course. Our hope is that we have provided enough direction to encourage instructors to select those activities of interest to them and adapt them to meet the specific needs of their students.

While our discussion has focused on services marketing concepts, experiential learning techniques are applicable to a wide range of marketing courses. We believe that the experiential learning activities we have described can help to transform the instructor from being "the sage on the stage" into "the guide on the side." In this process, many of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles for good practice in higher education are employed. For example, these experiential learning activities can encourage student-faculty contact as students seek direction, assistance, and insight from instructors as they work through the various exercises. Many of the exercises encourage cooperation among the students. None of the activities is designed or intended to pit one student against another. Instead, these activities are designed to encourage the entire class to learn from each other's experiences. These activities also encourage active learning. In fact, we have incorporated many of these activities into our courses so that students will process the material by applying or experiencing it. Students in our classes cannot merely show up for class and listen to lectures; students must become

**TABLE 2**  
**SUMMARY OF EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES**

<i>Experiential Exercise</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Key Services Marketing Objectives Addressed</i>	<i>"Learner-Centered" Principles Employed<sup>a</sup></i>
Exploring basic services concepts	Students take various perspectives in discussing the core benefits being provided by various medical service providers.	Develop an understanding of unique challenges in marketing and managing services; apply theoretical services marketing concepts to real-world settings.	3, 7
Service watch	Students seek out service-related articles in the popular press and illustrate their understanding of services marketing concepts.	Understand the unique challenges involved in marketing and managing services; identify various components of the services marketing mix.	3, 4, 5
Servicescape video	Students create a short video focusing on the servicescape and how it can influence the consumer's service experience.	Identify/analyze components of the services marketing mix; build important workplace skills (cooperation, teamwork).	2, 3, 7
Physical evidence field trip	Students visit two local service providers in the same industry to compare/contrast physical evidence from each.	Discover sources of competitive advantage.	1, 3, 5, 7
Company complaint letter	Students write a letter to a service provider whose service did not meet their expectations and then analyze the company's response.	Analyze various recovery issues; become a better and perhaps less naive service customer.	3, 6
Customers' roles in service delivery	Students are to identify a service requiring a significant level of customer participation and discuss the role that customers have in service delivery.	Appreciate the role of service personnel and customers in service delivery.	3, 5, 6, 7
Services marketing audit for a nonprofit organization	Student groups conduct a services marketing audit for a local nonprofit organization that can include discussion of areas in need of improvement and detailed recommendations for future changes.	Understand and communicate key issues in marketing and managing services; build important workplace skills (cooperation, teamwork, report writing).	2, 3, 5, 6
Service quality gap analysis	Student groups work with a client to identify and discuss various SERVQUAL gaps present in the firm.	Understand key issues in managing and measuring service quality and customer satisfaction.	2, 3, 5, 6
Blueprinting	Student groups create a blueprint (flow diagram of activities) of a provider's services (or of a specific process).	Appreciate issues related to the overlap in marketing, operations, and human resource systems.	1, 2, 3
Best practices	Student groups explore industry leaders to understand various practices used by the "best" firms.	Understand how service can become a source of competitive advantage.	2, 3, 5, 6
CD-ROM interactive simulations	Students participate in a simulation game that allows them to apply various concepts.	Understand key issues in managing service quality.	2, 3, 4, 7

a. The numbers in this column coincide with the seven guidelines for creating a learner-centered environment in higher education (Chickering and Gamson 1987) presented at the beginning of the article.

involved in the learning process. This diverse set of exercises clearly respects diverse talents and ways of learning. While it is probable that no one activity will work well for every student in the class, we believe our portfolio of experiential learning exercises provides opportunities for most students to become more full engaged.

## CONCLUSION

The classroom environment is a service encounter in and of itself. Hence, as is the case with many service encounters, customer participation is inherent in the production process. The exercises provided here provide insight into the process of incorporating experiential learning into the classroom experience to help instructors “manage” coproduced educational service experiences. Experiential learning requires that we turn a larger portion of the responsibility for learning over to the students themselves—empowering them to contribute actively to their educational experience. As a group, the exercises facilitate the cross-functional integration of course materials. In addition, the assignments engage students in an active learning environment that promotes teamwork and team building, team leadership, oral and written communication skills, and listening skills and fosters the talents needed to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Experiential learning allows students to “create knowledge” as they wrestle collaboratively with the marketing concepts. Through discussions with their peers, they develop a better understanding of the scope and complexity of the material. This may be especially important in an undergraduate marketing class in which concepts can seem simplistic and irrelevant to students if they are allowed to simply skim the surface of the content through the traditional course lecture format.

Engaging in experiential learning can be a messy process. Schibrowsky and Peltier (1995) report that the potential for academic dishonesty is greater for experiential activities as compared to traditional activities. For instance, when using a simulation exercise, problems can arise from current students obtaining previous-player information, unauthorized collaboration among groups, the outright stealing of information from other groups, and the lack of participation (“free riding”) by some group members.

In addition, it is often difficult for some instructors to give up total control of the classroom environment and refocus their role from “bosses” to “coaches and facilitators.” The shift from “boss” to “coach” involves providing an environment that is safe and conducive to explore experiential exercises by (1) emphasizing to students the importance of the intrinsic rewards of completing the assignment (e.g., after participating in this assignment, you will have a better feel for what it is like to be a manager) and (2) instilling in students an appreciation for the process of learning, not just the result. Consequently, instructors of experiential exercises should

also shift the method in which assignments are evaluated and include more process-oriented evaluations in addition to outcome-oriented evaluations. Process-oriented evaluations may include group and individual presentations pertaining to the experience and/or written reports that explain the rationale of decisions. Process-oriented evaluations also may include information about timetables followed, procedures implemented to keep the exercise on track, and feedback from external constituents (e.g., clients) concerning how the students interacted with outside parties if applicable.

We have become a very outcome-oriented society. When a course has been completed, students are constantly asked by parents, fellow students, and instructors, “What grade did you get?” Few ask, “What did you learn?” A major benefit of experiential learning exercises is that they can help maximize student learning by combining process-oriented exercises with outcome-oriented information for evaluation purposes, which is important when creating an environment that is conducive to experiential learning. But just as Merlyn instilled a love of learning in young King Arthur by serving as his coach and mentor, we can inspire our students by empowering them to be coproducers of their own educational experiences.

## NOTES

1. The Services Marketing Special Interest Group (SERVSIG) of the American Marketing Association (AMA) was formed to allow faculty with interests in services marketing to develop social and working relationships that focused on furthering services marketing research and services marketing education. During a SERVSIG meeting that occurred in conjunction with the 1998 AMA Summer Educators' Conference in Boston, a panel was created to share ideas for course assignments that facilitated experiential learning. It is our objective to share this discussion with a broader audience through this article. Most of the ideas shared here have been passed along to the authors from other instructors and have been refined over time.

2. Search attributes of a product can be determined prior to purchase. Experience attributes can only be determined during and after consumption. Credence attributes are difficult to determine even after purchase and use.

3. Elements of the servicescape that affect customers include exterior features of an organization's physical facility (such as signs, parking, or the landscape) as well as internal features (interior design, equipment, or decor) (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996). See Bitner (1992) for a thorough discussion of servicescapes.

4. For example, services with a moderate level of customer involvement include haircuts, tax preparation, and financial planning. Services with a high level of customer involvement include physical therapy, weight reduction programs, golf lessons, and services marketing classes.

5. The Shouldice Hospital Limited case is a 1983 Harvard Business School case (number 9-683-068) written by James L. Heskett.

6. The costs for adopting the simulation package are now minimal. The licensing fee has been waived, and the cost per disk is \$16. Students can purchase the disks individually or share the cost among groups. Additional information can be obtained from Customer Service at Harvard Business School Publishing: (800) 545-7685 (United States and Canada) or (617) 495-6117 (outside North America). A new simulation titled *Managing Customers for Profit* is now available also.

## REFERENCES

- Berry, Leonard L., Jeffrey S. Conant, and A. Parasuraman. 1991. A framework for conducting a services marketing audit. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 19 (summer): 255-68.

- Bitner, Mary Jo. 1992. Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing* 56 (April): 57-71.
- Carman, James M. 1990. Consumer perceptions of service quality: An assessment of the SERVQUAL dimensions. *Journal of Retailing* 66 (spring): 33-55.
- Chickering, Arthur C., and Zelda F. Gamson. 1987. *Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education*. From a pamphlet based on material in *The Wingspread Journal*. Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation.
- Cunningham, Anthony C. 1995. Developing marketing professionals: What can business schools learn? *Journal of Marketing Education* 17 (summer): 3-9.
- Floyd, Callum J., and Mary Ellen Gordon. 1998. What skills are most important? A comparison of employer, student, and staff perceptions. *Journal of Marketing Education* 20 (summer): 103-9.
- Hafner, Katie. 1996. The doctor is on. *Newsweek*, 27 May, 77-78.
- Hoffman, K. Douglas. 1997. The services marketing curriculum: An overview of the services marketing special interest group syllabi collection. In *Marketing theory and applications*, Vol. 8, edited by D. T. LeClair and M. Hartline, 86-92. Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Hoffman, K. Douglas, and John E. G. Bateson. 1997. *Essentials of services marketing*. Fort Worth, TX: Dryden.
- Koch, Adam J. 1997. Marketing curriculum: Designing its new logic and structure. *Journal of Marketing Education* 19 (fall): 2-16.
- Kohn, Alfie. 1993. Choices for children. *Phi Delta Kappan* 75:8-20.
- Kotler, Philip. 1997. *Marketing management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Lamb, Charles W., Shannon S. Shipp, and William C. Moncrief III. 1995. Integrating skills and content knowledge in the marketing curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education* 17 (summer): 10-19.
- Lamont, Lawrence M., and Ken Friedman. 1997. Meeting the challenges to undergraduate marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education* 19 (fall): 17-30.
- Louis, M. R. 1990. The gap in management education. *Selections: The Magazine of the Graduate Management Admissions Council* (winter): 1-12.
- Lovelock, Christopher H., and Lauren K. Wright. 1999. *Principles of service marketing and management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- O'Banion, Terry. 1997. *A learning college for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- O'Hara, Bradley S., and Teri Root Shaffer. 1995. Details and student perceptions of an experiential program for personal selling and purchasing classes. *Journal of Marketing Education* 17 (spring): 41-49.
- O'Reilly, Brian. 1994. Re-engineering the MBA. *Fortune*, 24 January, 38-47.
- Purvis, Andrew. 1991. Reach out and cure someone. *Time*, 22 July, 54.
- Schibrowsky, John A., and James W. Peltier. 1995. The dark side of experiential learning activities. *Journal of Marketing Education* 17 (spring): 13-24.
- Shostack, G. Lynn. 1977. Breaking free from product marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 41 (April): 73-80.
- . 1986. Service positioning through structural change. *Journal of Marketing* 51 (January): 34-43.
- White, Terence H. 1939. *The once and future king*. New York: Putnam.
- Wright, Lauren K., Mary Jo Bitner, and Valarie A. Zeithaml. 1994. Paradigm shifts in business education: Using active learning to deliver services marketing content. *Journal of Marketing Education* 16 (fall): 5-19.
- . 1997. *Services marketing: An active learning resource guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wright, Lauren K., and Christopher H. Lovelock. 1999. *Principles of service marketing and management instructor's resource manual*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Zeithaml, Valarie A. 1981. How consumer evaluation processes differ between goods and services. In *Marketing of services*, edited by J. H. Donnelly and W. R. George, 186-90. Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., Leonard L. Berry, and A. Parasuraman. 1993. The nature and determinants of customer expectations of service. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 21 (winter): 1-12.
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., and Mary Jo Bitner. 1996. *Services marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., A. Parasuraman, and Leonard L. Berry. 1990. *Delivering quality service*. New York: Free Press.