

DEVELOPING A BUSINESS-BASED ADVERTISING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study solicits feedback among advertising practitioners on the BSC-Advertising Management Program of De La Salle University. The objectives were to determine their various reactions and to evaluate whether DLSU made the right move in offering a business-based advertising program.

A descriptive method was employed through a survey questionnaire purposively mailed to top executives of the industry. Based on the results, the major conclusion showed that the University, by offering a business-based advertising program, was responsive to the needs of the advertising practitioners. The curriculum offered subjects that were relevant and up-to-date. They made clear, however, that for the program to succeed, the skills that should be enhanced are the students' creative thinking, oral communication, and planning skills; and that the program needs a creative teacher who is a practitioner himself.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly everyone in the modern world is influenced to some degree by advertising and other forms of promotion. Organizations in both the private and public sectors have learned that the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently with target audiences is critical to their success. Most of the people involved in advertising and promotion will tell you that this marketing communications field is such a very dynamic and fascinating field to either practice or study. However, they will also tell you that the field is undergoing dramatic changes that threaten to change advertising and promotion forms. The threats come on all sides -- clients demanding better results from their advertising and promotional budgets; lean but highly creative smaller ad agencies; sales promotion and direct marketing firms which want a larger share of the

money companies spend each year promoting their products and services; consumers who no longer respond to traditional forms of advertising; and new technologies that may reinvent the very process of advertising (Belch and Belch 1995).

This is where the threat of stagnation comes along the way. Is the advertising industry prepared to handle all the dramatic changes happening world-wide today? Is there adequate manpower that can cope with these changes? Is the academic community that provides this manpower be able to produce qualified graduates who can learn the ABCs of advertising quickly and wizardly?

In other words, do the schools and universities have the right and ideal courses to offer so that when students graduate, they are qualified to assume frontline management positions in the field of advertising?

THE PROBLEM

Developing a program leading to the Degree Bachelor of Science in Commerce (BSC) Major in Advertising Management.

Is there a market for BSC-Advertising Management Program? This has been a perennial question among academic institutions in the Philippines today. While it is tedious and expensive to offer such a program, the most critical issue is the question on whether a considerable number of students are willing to pursue this course. The next critical issue is whether the school is prepared to provide a competent faculty that can handle highly specialized subjects like account management, copywriting, art direction, media planning and production courses. The third issue is the adequacy of audio-visual facilities that are essential in offering such a course. There are of course other concerns.

With this scenario, the Marketing Department of the College of Business and Economics of De La Salle University (DLSU) Manila, has bravely faced the challenge and offered a BSC-Advertising Management Program in collaboration with Communication Arts Department of the College of Liberal Arts. The Program is business-based, but due to its similar liberal arts orientation, some production courses are taken in the latter college.

While the official implementation of the program was a result of feedback from previous students who clamored for such a course and a growing observation that practitioners look for better trained business or communication arts graduates, no formal study was conducted to interview practitioners on what kind of course they really need. Hence, a study was conducted to solicit feedback from the advertising and related marketing communications practitioners on their reactions to the new program.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive method to gather feedback among industry practitioners on the BSC-Advertising Management Program. The approach was through a survey questionnaire to probe the reactions of key advertising executives or marketing communications experts on DLSU's new course offering (Kotler & Armstrong, 1989).

The practitioners purposively selected were company representatives of client, advertising agency, media, and supplier industry associations taken from the membership directories of these associations. They were mailed a structured questionnaire and their responses were collated, tabulated, and evaluated. Out of 400 mailed questionnaires, the total rate of response was 36% or 144 actual respondents. The respondents selected were CEOs, VPs, and Directors; hence, their responses provided very valid comments.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The schools that supplied the best manpower included De La Salle University in the first cluster of schools. However, the cluster was dominated by the University of the Philippines, the country's premier state university.

- In the area of specialization, the courses the advertising manpower pursued while in college were mass communication and marketing. Other programs that were pursued by a significant number of respondents were advertising, fine arts, and business management.
- Almost one-half of the respondents strongly agreed that a 4-year advertising management degree should be offered in college. They believe that there is a market for this course since their manpower is not academically prepared and needs to be trained further upon hiring.
- Close to 50% of the respondents claimed that an advertising management program should be offered by the College of Business Administration, in general ; and the Department of Marketing and Advertising, in particular. They believe that advertising students should have a strong business background if they wish to become future advertising executives. This issue was raised by the client and the media/supplier sectors. However, the agency sector's opinion was split between the College of Business Administration and the College of Liberal Arts/ Department of Communication as the college which should offer the program. While they recognize the business skills the students should possess, the student should likewise have a strong liberal arts background for them to succeed in a highly creative, artistic industry.
- Over 40% of the respondents recommended BSC or Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) for an advertising management program. This was the recommendation from most respondents from the client and media/supplier sectors. However, the agency sector was equally recommending BSC/BSBA or Bachelor of Arts (AB).
- The major subjects to be offered were prioritized as follows: Advertising Principles, Marketing Principles, Media Planning, Consumer Behavior, Account Planning/ Strategic Planning, Marketing Research, Creative Writing/Copywriting, Advertising Campaign Presentation, and Account Management

- The skills that should be further enhanced rated Creative Thinking as Number 1, Oral Communication as Number 2, Planning as Number 3, Creative Writing as Number 4, and Business Writing as Number 5.
- Teaching methodologies that were significantly preferred were Hands-on/Practicum, Lectures and Discussions, and Case Studies. Other methods identified by more than one-half of the respondents were seminars and workshops as well as individual/group projects.
- With regard to teachers' profile, all sectors of the sample were unanimous in their choice of practitioners as the best teachers who can more capably teach advertising management subjects. For them, a competent faculty presupposes that they have gained a reasonable amount of advertising experience.
- For successful implementation of the program, the respondents recommended primarily the development of practicum/related linkages with the advertising industry and the hiring of practitioners as lecturers and teachers. Other noteworthy recommendations were the enhancement of audio-visual and computer facilities, and periodic review of subjects offerings to bring them up-to-date.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, the following conclusions were arrived at:

- De La Salle University which has offered a BSC-Advertising Management Program is responsive to the needs of the advertising industry.

The feedback survey showed that a degree in advertising that is primarily business-based is most needed. The marketing communications industry is in urgent need of qualified manpower which can immediately be harnessed. Training is an expensive process; hence, if the advertising graduate is equipped with the necessary skills, the industry can cope with the demands of a constantly evolving industry. A communication arts graduate may not have adequate skills since he lacks marketing and business knowhow. Similarly,

a business management graduate lacks advertising and production orientation that is given to most communication arts and fine arts graduate. Hence, an advertising management program that recognizes all these skills can produce graduates who can be readily employed. In addition, since De La Salle University offers a unique Liberal Arts-Commerce degree, the student who pursues an AB course with advertising management as his specialization in commerce may have an added competitive advantage over other graduates.

- The subjects that the practitioners identified which should be given priority in the BSC-Advertising Management Program are all offered in the program of the University.

It is interesting to note that all the priority subjects raised by the practitioners are all offered in the new program. Subjects in account management, creative, media, and research are all required to be taken to complete the degree. Even a new field like strategic planning or account planning is included in the program and is in fact considered a foundation course. These results showed that the DLSU's program can meet the demands of the industry and is very up-to-date.

- The skills that should be enhanced in an advertising student are his creative thinking, oral communication, and planning ability.

The advertising industry is a creative industry. Hence, the people that will succeed in this industry should have a lot of creative thinking skills. Similarly, the people must be very articulate for them to be able to communicate persuasively to a lot of other people and executives their creative ideas. They should also maximize their planning skills since advertising executives are engaged in a lot of strategic planning for their campaigns to successfully carry impact on the target consumers.

- An advertising management program needs a creative teacher who is a practitioner himself or has had an advertising or related experience.

Unlike other fields of specialization, advertising is best taught by a creative practitioner who can vary his teaching methods through the adoption of hands-on experience or practicum, lectures and

discussions, case studies, seminars and workshops, and individual/group projects. Advanced degrees are acceptable, but what is more critical is the ability of the teacher to relate actual experience to the students so that the latter can be exposed to the real world of advertising. In this manner, they do not get disoriented or misdirected when they work for a marketing communications company. Additionally, these teachers can establish linkages with various advertising agencies of which they have been connected with thus making advertising education relevant, progressive, and up-to-date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the students. An advertising student is expected to be creative. Hence, to tap his hidden talents, he should excel not only in his academic or curricular activities but also in his extra-curricular activities where he can join associations like the student marketing association, the camera club, the debate society and the like that can draw out his creative potentials and hone his oral and planning skills. Most importantly, he is encouraged to read, read and read and expose himself through the various media of mass communication so that he can cope adequately with the information explosion.

To the faculty. Since the faculty members are encouraged to become practitioners themselves, full-timers should undergo a "faculty practicum" themselves so that their ideas do not become obsolete. They can engage in research activities relevant to advertising and mass communication, write a textbook on advertising management or become honorary members or associate members of any of the advertising industry associations. They can also attend national and international conferences. In this manner, they become teachers who "practice what they preach" and gain the respect of the students.

To the Administrators. A successful program needs an all-out support from the school administration. This can be concretized through approval of more contemporary audio-visual and computer facilities, linkages with universities abroad, consortium with other schools, and finally linkages with the advertising industry practitioners. Practicum should be formalized so that students would readily avail themselves of these tie-ups. Professorial chairs

should be established to assure the university of a commitment from these advertising companies. The administrators should support the faculty when they attend advertising conferences and trips abroad to gain wider perspective. Similarly, they should upgrade the library facilities to provide students and faculty with the latest books, journals and research materials on advertising.

To the Advertising Industry. De La Salle University is providing the industry a service for initiating an Advertising Management Program. Hence, it is strongly recommended that clients, advertising agencies, media, and suppliers support the program in whatever way they can. They can accept practicumers, conduct student workshops like that of J. Walter Thompson's University Reach Out Program, or train students like that of AdSchool of Basic Advertising, Inc. The industry association can provide scholarships to deserving students, and their member-companies can give grants to support professorial chairs. During an advertising congress, the industry can sponsor students and faculty to attend so that the latter can interact with practitioners and be informed of the latest developments and technology in advertising.

To the Readers of this Paper. It is recommended that the readers of this paper conduct follow-up research studies that will probe further the implementability of an advertising management program under a business-based curriculum. Since the advertising agencies studied were equally recommending a Commerce or a Liberal Arts degree in Advertising, more research is needed in this regard so that the graduates of DLSU or other universities which may want to offer an Advertising Management Program will become immediately hireable and superiorly qualified to take on an advertising job.

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