

**CREATING AND OPERATING A STUDENT-RUN/FACULTY-SPONSORED MARKETING
RESEARCH AGENCY**

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ABSTRACT

A problem that many marketing students face upon graduation is that they may not be as "marketable" as they were led to believe. These students will be armed with an arsenal of classroom-based theories and strategies that will supposedly prepare them to do battle in today's competitive business arena. However, due to a lack of business-related experience, a number of these students will in fact be unprepared for many of the challenges awaiting them in the "real world". The findings of a study commissioned by the AACSB substantiated this viewpoint. Business managers and executives reported that they would like to see more "realistic, practical, hands-on" experiences that provide students with a wider range of "people" related leadership and interpersonal skills (Porter and McKibbin 1988).

Academic experiential activities such as guest speakers, case studies, class projects, simulation games, internships, and student organizations are all designed with the above experience-generating objective in mind. However, the problem remains that more business-related learning options are needed to help students prepare themselves for "life" beyond school.

The purpose of the paper is to discuss one such option, Creative Marketing Unlimited (CMU), a student-run/faculty-sponsored marketing research agency that the authors were instrumental in developing while faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. The paper is organized as follows. First, a historical background of CMU is presented. Second, the benefits of such an agency are discussed. These include benefits to students, benefits to faculty members, benefits to the department, and benefits to the community. Third, prerequisite conditions that must be met before a successful student research agency can be implemented are provided. These include a committed faculty, a committed body of students, and a business community that is receptive to "buying" student research. Fourth, steps to follow in starting-up a student research agency are given. These steps focus on general start-up activities, election procedures, promotion of the new agency, and agency maintenance. Finally, some potentially useful suggestions for success are examined. These suggestions are concerned with such issues as assessing the university reward system, faculty leadership responsibilities, roles of the faculty advisor, student training, and agency checks and balances.

Bibliography

Porter, Lyman W. and Lawrence E. McKibbin, Management Education and Development: Drift or Thrust Into the 21st Century?, Highstown, NJ: McGraw-Hill, 1988.