TAKING THE PROFESSIONAL SALES STUDENT TO THE FIELD FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Identifying and incorporating appropriate teaching methods is one of the critical components to effective education. The challenge for educators is to identify course delivery methods that meet student requirements for an interesting and enjoyable class while generating a level of quality and effectiveness of course material to meet learning objectives. A fundamental component of a professional selling curriculum is the sales process. Students must understand it and be capable of successfully managing their way through it when engaging in business-to-business selling activity. This paper outlines a class project that helps students better understand the professional selling process by incorporating experiential learning in a manner consistent with the AMA faculty consortium agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty attending the 1999 American Marketing Association Faculty Consortium on Professional Selling and Sales Management laid out an agenda for teaching professional selling in the next millennium. The group's recommended methods for teaching professional selling included: on-campus field experiences, mentors, career shadowing, role-play, and involving sales experts in role-play and other types of training (Marshall and Michaels 2001). Perhaps the most popular among these methods is the role-play. It is not uncommon for sales courses to include role-play as part of the coursework (Sojka and Fish 2008; Widmier, Loe, and Selden). Role-play and the other methods mentioned above are popular because they employ active learning and the use of experiential activities (Adrian and Palmer 1999; Gremler et al. 2000; Inks and Avila 2008; Karns 2005; Kennedy et al. 2001; Smart et al. 1999; Smith 2004; Smith and Van Doren 2004; Wright et al. 1994).

Identifying and incorporating appropriate teaching methods is one of the critical components to effective education. Another critical component is content. Sales courses (e.g., professional selling, advanced professional selling, sales management) adopting the methods mentioned above must also meet learning objectives set by the college and university, as well as deliver specific skill sets sought by employers (e.g., Ackerman et al. 2003; Barr and McNeilly 2002; Floyd and Gordon 1998; Paranto and Kelkar 1999; Smith 2004; Tomkovick et al. 1996). The challenge for educators is to identify course delivery methods that meet student 'requirements' for an interesting and enjoyable class while generating a level of quality

and effectiveness of the course material to meet learning objectives (Ferrell and Gonzalez 2004; Gonzalez et al 2004; Inks and Avila 2008; Karns 2005; Smith and Van Doren 2004; Tomkovick 2004; Wooldridge 2006).

The purpose of this papers is to outline a class project that helps students better understand the professional selling process by incorporating experiential learning in a manner consistent with the AMA faculty consortium agenda. Specifically, the paper describes how students learn the sales process by selling NBA basketball tickets for a professional basketball franchise.

BACKGROUND

The effectiveness of a learning method is influenced by the student's perceived value of the learning experience. If the learning experience is perceived positively (e.g., valuable, fun, interactive, interesting, enjoyable), students are more likely to engage in the learning experience (Barr and McNeilly 2002; Ferrell and Gonzalez 2004; Gonzalez et al. 2004; Inks and Avila 2008; Karns 2005; Smith and Van Doren 2004; Tomkovick 2004; Wooldridge 2006). Traditional teaching methods (e.g., lecture, textbook assignments and readings) have focused on passive learning, which introduces students to a basic understanding of the content and provides minimal skill development (Drea 1997). In contrast to passive learning methods, active or experiential learning (e.g., immersive learning) methods enhance the value and relevance of the material through application, which motivates students to develop a more comprehensive skill set (Drea 1997; McCormick 1993). As the name implies, experiential learning incorporates experience in the learning process,

an inclusion that distinguishes it from cognitive learning and behavioral learning (Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis 2001). Students engaged in experiential learning make their own decisions regarding their behaviors/actions and learn while engaging in those behaviors and from the consequences of their choices.

Kolb (1984) conceptualized experiential learning as consisting of four components. The four components include Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. In this conceptualization of experiential learning, students learn through:

- ♦ actual experience (as opposed to observation/ modeling),
- ♦ reflection on the experience,
- ♦ integration of their own knowledge (built on understanding and incorporating existing theory) and their reflections of their direct experience into new ideas,
- ♦ using those new ideas to engage in and manage new experiences.

This is a cyclical process in that students can continue to learn from precedent experiences to shape management of subsequent experiences.

A large body of business education research has focused on the value of engaging students through experiential learning. One of the most common forms of experiential learning utilized in sales courses is the role-play. In sales role-play, the student acts as a salesperson and conducts a sales call with a buyer (played by another student, faculty member, or business person). Typically, the role-play is recorded and the recording is made available to the student for review. Consistent with Kolb (1984), this exercise provides students the opportunity to engage in the experience of selling (although not "real-world" experience), review the recording of their experience, reflect on their experience (often with the aid of the instructor) within the context of what they've learned about selling, and then integrate their reflections into their understanding of sales and how to successfully engage in selling activity. Ideally, the students will then have a subsequent opportunity to repeat this process (i.e., another role-play) in order to fine-tune their knowledge and skill set. The pervasiveness of the use of role-play is evidenced by the growing popularity of intercollegiate sales competitions based on role-play (e.g., the National Collegiate Sales Competition – Kennesaw State University, World Collegiate Sales Open – Northern Illinois University, The Great Northwoods Sales Warm-Up – University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, National Team Selling Competition – Indiana University, Regional Sales Competition – Ball State University).

Although researchers and educators identify the importance of sales call role-play, these activities are limited by the extent to which students are exposed to the business world and the actual role of a salesperson. Role-play do provide students the opportunity to experience selling, however, the experience is in a simulated business environment. While role-play helps students improve their selling knowledge and skills, they do not offer students the opportunity to see how the in-class exercises apply to a real-world context. One option is to employ a job shadowing exercise in which students shadow salespeople as they engage in real-world sales calls. This sort of exercise helps students learn through direct observation and can be useful both before and after role-play experiences. Unfortunately, because student participation is confined to observation only, the exercise limits the engagement and the learning opportunity.

Exercises that incorporate actual sales experience overcome the obstacles associated with role-play and job shadowing. In these types of exercises, students are responsible for conducting real sales calls, with real customers making real buying decisions. The exercise described in this paper focuses on helping students better understand the sales process by engaging in real sales calls.

The sales process is described in several sales and marketing texts. While subtle nuances exist, the steps of the sales process are generally consistent across texts. For purposes of this paper, we define the sales process as including the following stages:

- ♦ Prospecting
- ♦ Information Gathering
- ♦ Uncovering needs
- ♦ Presenting Solutions
- ♦ Handling Resistance
- ♦ Gaining Commitment
- ♦ Post-Sale Follow-up

EXPERIENCING THE SALES PROCESS IN THE FIELD: AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO LEARNING THE PROFESSIONAL SELLING SALES PROCESS

Overview

Popular textbooks including, Ingram et al. 2011, Futrell 2011, and Weitz et al. 2008, devote roughly fifty percent of their chapters to the sales process. Reading about the sales process and participating in sales call role-playing is a great start to learning the sales process both cognitively and behaviorally. As previously discussed, role-playing is an experiential exercise that offers students the opportunity to learn-by-doing and then reflect on their experience so that they may improve their knowledge and performance moving forward. However, given that role-play by definition is simulation (and therefore, contrived), it cannot offer students the same learning experience provide by selling a real product in a market that is real, dynamic, and unpredictable (i.e., not contrived).

The project described below entails students selling

tickets for an NBA franchise team. The students are responsible for engaging in and completing each stage of the sales process. And because they are responsible in engaging in the sales process multiple times (Concrete Experience), they have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences (Reflective Observation), learn from their successes and failures (Abstract Conceptualization), and make improvements as they go (Active Experimentation).

The exercise mirrors the sales process and the instructor establishes learning objectives for each stage. As in real-world sales, students (salespeople) differ with respect to their motivation, initiative, and selling skill set (including interpersonal communication and time management). As a result, they move through the project at different rates of time and with different levels of success. It is important for the instructor to set expectations (described below) and hold students accountable for their relative performance (as is done in the real-world).

The bulk of the students' work on this project will be completed outside of class. However, the instructor allocates class time (during the project time frame) for class discussion and role-play in order to help students develop their knowledge and skills during the learning experience.

Role-Play

Having class discussion and providing direction and feedback are important components of this exercise. One of the most important components is role-playing (may be conducted throughout the project timeframe). Role-playing gives students to practice their skills in preparation for a real-world sales experience, or just after one to aid in the reflection on the experience just completed. In addition, role-playing allows students to "workshop" different strategies and tactics. During the term of the project, students partner up and engage in role-play for each part of the sales call process (other than prospecting) separately. This allows the students to focus on and polish a particular skill (e.g., handling resistance) before moving on to the next.

The role-play may be done in private or in front of the class. Role-playing in front of the class adds a bit of pressure but also enhances the learning experience. Students get immediate feedback from the instructor and their peers, and can observe and learn from others engaging in role-play. When ready, students role-play the entire sales call – from start to finish. This is done in-front of the class and under the direct observation of the instructor.

Keys to success in using role-play as a learning opportunity include (1) allowing the students to select skills on which they want to work, (2) varying the behaviors, needs, and concerns of the buyer, (3) providing critical feedback to the student(s) in the role-play and to any observers, and (4) repetition.

Allowing the students to select skills on which they want to work requires students to assess their knowledge and skill level and address areas of concern. Varying the behaviors, needs, and concerns of the buyer prevents students from memorizing a "mental script" used to get through a particular role-play and, accordingly, helps them better prepare for the unpredictable nature of selling. Providing immediate feedback helps students make connections between behaviors and consequences (good or bad). And it gives observing students the opportunity to "learn by teaching" as they share observations and commentary. Finally, repetition is important for giving students the opportunity to incorporate what they are learning through reflective observation and abstract conceptualization into subsequent selling experiences (active experimentation). Repetition also breeds confidence as students become more competent. Role-play is best conducted during class time, but the instructor encourages students to continue to practice on their own (i.e., outside of class or in addition to any required practice).

Project Stages

The instructor allows the students 8 weeks to complete the project, including hitting assigned targets and turning in all related reports. Below is a discussion of each stage of the exercise, which follows the stages of the sales process, and the relevant learning objectives. It is important to note that once the project is underway, students should have prospects at different stages of the sales process. It is likely that students will move some initial prospects (e.g., family and friends) through the sales process rapidly (perhaps on day 1), while taking longer with others prospects. As the project progresses, students will identify new prospects and attempt to move those through the sales process. By the second or third week of the project, students should have a relatively full pipeline (i.e., prospects at each stage of the sales process, with more at the earlier stages and fewer at the latter stages).

Stage 1 – Prospecting:

Learning Objective 1: The student understands the strategic process of generating and prioritizing leads.

It is critical for students to understand the importance of the sales pipeline and how to prioritize leads. Strategic prospecting is a process designed to identify, qualify, and prioritize sales opportunities. Working individually, students generate an initial set of sales leads based on their sense of what organizations and/or individuals may be interested in tickets for an NBA game. Next, the instructor leads the class through a brainstorming session during which additional leads are identified and added to the list of leads generated by the students individually. During this part of the project the instructor provides suggestions regarding criteria for identifying leads. These suggestions serve as learning opportunities because students often

aren't aware of effective criteria for identifying leads. Upon completion of the brainstorming session the class has a long list of potential leads. An example of such a list is presented in Appendix A.

Next, the instructor leads the class through a discussion regarding criteria for prioritizing the leads. Prioritizing criteria include company size, perceived need for tickets (e.g., are they likely to entertain clients), location, and whether an existing relationship already exists (e.g., someone on the team knows someone at the targeted organization). Using the established criteria, each student identifies and prioritizes fifteen accounts from the master list for which they are responsible. To reduce the potential for conflict, students have first dibs on leads they suggested; students pick remaining leads in some order determined by the instructor. We do allow team selling when two or more students feel strongly about the same lead. Finally, each student labels each lead as "warm" or "cold" based upon whether the students know the lead or a contact at the organization identified as a lead (i.e., employed by the prospect, friends or family, knows the business owner, lives in the apartment complex, belongs to a student group "Delta Sigma Pi"); the rest of the leads are cold leads. If for some reason a student has a list of warm leads only, the instructor assigns the student three to five cold leads. The learning opportunity is for students to make sales calls on both warm leads and cold leads so they experience the challenges of a cold call and the relative benefits of a warm call. At the end of the project, the instructor breaks out sales data based on sales sold to warm leads and the sales to cold leads. The sales to warm leads are always significantly higher than sales to cold leads, which underscores the value of warm leads.

Stage 2 – Information Gathering Approach:

Learning Objective 2: The student understands the importance of gathering pertinent information about the prospect using various sources.

Before the students approach their prospects they are asked to gather information on each lead. A call log sheet is provided (see Appendix B), which doubles as a prospect information tracking sheet, detailing the type of information students need to collect (alternatively, instructors may design a customized prospect information sheet). Students begin the information gathering process by collecting basic contact information for each prospect (prospect's name, address, email, receptionist's name, etc.) as detailed on the call log sheet. Students use a variety of methods to gather the required information, including company websites and phone calls to administrative assistants. By visiting and reviewing the respective company websites, students gain insight into the organization (e.g., products, markets, strengths, and so forth) and may pick-up a few good ideas for icebreakers (e.g., press releases).

The required information comes rather readily for the prospects with which the students have an existing relationship or prior contact. These prospects are often referred to as *warm* leads because a basis for communication between the two parties is already established. In contrast, cold leads are those leads with which the salesperson (student in this case) has no previous connection or basis for communication. It is a bigger challenge for students to collect information about these prospects. Students experiencing the difference between working with *warm* and *cold* lead represents another learning opportunity in which students discover the value of working with warm leads. This is also an opportunity to demonstrate the value of business social networking (e.g., LinkedIn) and its potential for reducing the challenge of gathering information and increasing the likelihood of working with warm rather than cold leads.

Stage 3 – Uncovering Needs:

Learning Objective 3: The student understands the importance of using questioning techniques to effectively uncover the prospect needs.

The next stage in the process is to develop questions that help the students gather the information they need to make a good presentation. Under the guidance of the instructor, students review the ADAPT and SPIN questioning techniques to set the appropriate framework for identifying effective need-development questions. The instructor provides a worksheet for students to utilize as they develop their questions (See Appendix C). It is important that the instructor make clear the purpose of the worksheet, which is to help students get comfortable with the types of questions they need to ask. The worksheet is not a tool for developing a script. Scripts are counter to the interactive and professional nature of business-to-business selling.

The instructor encourages the students to begin by concentrating on assessing the prospects current situation, identifying specific situations in which NBA tickets may be useful (e.g., rewarding employees, entertaining clients). This is usually not too difficult for students because part of the qualifying and prioritizing process included assessing the prospect in these areas.

During this exercise, students discover, an important fact to uncover is whether the prospect (or prospect's organization) uses sporting events for business purposes (e.g., employee incentives, entertain customers). Subsequent need identification questions will differ for those that do use sporting events and those that do not. For those that don't, students' subsequent questions will need to give some attention to why not. For those that do, students' subsequent questions will need to focus on uncovering problems or dissatisfactions with the current sporting event provider. Alternatively, if the experience has

been positive, the focus needs to shift to uncovering interest in adding an additional opportunity with, in this case, NBA tickets.

For example, some prospects already work with other professional, semi-professional, or college sports team organizations. Each of those organizations has ticket, suite, and signage packages. If the prospect has previously purchased tickets then the questions move toward the discovery of how that experience worked-out and whether the prospect experienced and related problems or dissatisfactions (typical problems include poor seats, cost, too few games, and location).

As mentioned above, students need to develop need identification questions based on the situation information. Here, students focus on questions designed to uncover challenges the prospect is facing (or has faced) with respect to the situation already uncovered. Students often have more difficulty here because the task involves incorporating a mix of both open-end and closed-end questions to uncover problems. For example, a typical question a student may create is "Have you had any trouble when entertaining your customers?" While a "yes" answer is desirable, the question doesn't uncover the type of trouble, the frequency of the trouble, or why the trouble occurs. Follow-up questions may include "What type of trouble have you experienced?" "How often does the trouble occur?" and "What causes the trouble?"

Finally, students are encouraged to prepare consequence questions. These questions focus on the impact of the existing problem and/or the value of using a sporting event to accomplish organizational objectives. For example: "Do you feel the poor seat location adversely impact the effectiveness of the event?" In practice, prospects often provide this sort of information when answering the problem-oriented questions. However, it is nonetheless valuable for students to think through these questions so they are prepared to ask them should the opportunity arise.

Stage 4 – Presenting Solutions:

Learning Objective 4: The student organizes and presents an appropriate solution based upon the needs of the prospect.

Instructors have the students ask at least 3–5 situation questions, 1–2 problem questions, and 1–2 consequence questions per sales call. Once this information has been gathered the students are ready to present their solution. In preparation for presenting solutions, the instructor leads the class through a discussion of how the various ticket packages represent different opportunities. This helps them to be better prepared for presenting an appropriate solution. For example, this NBA franchise has some ticket packages focusing on the entire NBA game experience rather than simply seat location. One ticket package includes a hot dog, chips, coke, and a free tee-shirt with the purchase of the ticket. This may be a good option for youth groups or companies that want to include children, or are otherwise looking for a low-cost solution.

Stage 5 – Handling Resistance:

Learning Objective 5: The student understands how to anticipate possible objections and clearly presents solutions to each objection.

Sales resistance is defined as behavior (verbal and/or nonverbal) exhibited by a prospect that impedes the progress of the sale. Students begin to prepare for handling resistance by reviewing general objection handling strategies. Next, students engage in a brainstorming session in order to list several possible objections. Typical objection includes: price is too high; seats are not good; location and parking are inconvenient, etc. Instructors hand out a worksheet (Appendix D) that each student fills out addressing the type of objection and possible answers to each objection. Once this is done, students practice handling each objection during the role-play sessions. Finally, using a worksheet provided by the instructor (see Appendix D), the students plan response strategies to the three to five objections viewed as most likely to be expressed. The learning opportunity is for students to engage in critical thinking with respect to identifying likely objections, and then strategic thinking when developing resolution strategies.

Stage 6 – Gaining Commitment:

Learning Objective 6: The student understands how to learn commitment.

Asking for the order is typically a challenge for most inexperienced salespeople. One of the learning opportunities of this project is giving students real-world experience with gaining commitment. Students prepare by reviewing techniques for earning commitment (although most will simply ask for the order) and discussing with the instructor the appropriate strategies. The closing techniques we concentrate on include direct request (simply asking for the order), alternative choice (asking the buyer which of the two or three choices presented he/she would like to purchase), success story (relating another customer's successful experience associated with attending an NBA game and then asking for the order), and summary close (summarizing the agreed benefits of attending an NBA game and then asking for the order).

Next, the instructor advises students that some of the calls will end with a "maybe" or in a way otherwise requiring future attention. Students are told to be prepared for situations in which they will need to make additional

sales calls (either in person or over the phone) with the prospect. Follow-up activities may include determining the seating location available or if a certain price category is available.

While the project is in progress, students turn in sales call reports every two weeks. One week prior to the end of the project the call reports are handed back and updated with the follow-up activities that have taken place (See Appendix E). The learning opportunity here is that students quickly realize most of their sales take place after several call-backs.

Stage 7 – Post-Sale Follow-up:

Learning Objective 7: The student understands the importance of the follow-up.

In traditional selling, salespeople often thought that their job was over when they earned commitment. Typically, once the order was obtained, they moved on to the next prospect. Any follow-up or customer service was minimal. Follow-up is important for several reasons. First, follow-up allows the salesperson to makes sure the customer's expectations were met or exceeded. Failure to meet the customer's expectations (influenced by the salesperson during the presentation of solutions portion of the sales call) equates to customer dissatisfaction. Dissatisfied customers are less likely (than satisfied customers) to trust the salesperson in future endeavors, provide referrals, promote the salesperson's company/products (positive word of mouth), or purchase from the salesperson a second time.

In contrast, satisfied customers are more likely (than dissatisfied customers) to trust the salesperson, provide referrals, engage in positive word of mouth behaviors, and become repeat customers of the salesperson. These benefits are tied to two other reasons follow-up is important – referrals and repeat business. Follow-up gives salespeople the opportunity to obtain meaningful referrals from the customer and to set the groundwork for the next purchase cycle (which may be days, weeks, months, or years depending upon the product). Good salespeople understand that satisfied customers are one of the most effective sources of future business. In research involving 80,000 business customers, the number one characteristic found to define a world-class salesperson is someone who personally manages the customer's satisfaction by being accountable for the customer's desired results (Chally Group 2007).

Given the limited time frame and nature of the project, post-sales follow-up is minimal. First, students have little recourse to address customer dissatisfaction (should it exist), other than referring them to the NBA franchise customer service personnel. Second, the students are not dependent upon referrals or future ticket sales because their responsibilities end with termination of the project. Nevertheless, follow-up is important and the instructor may require some follow-up activity (e.g., phone call) for the students to successfully complete the project. To help motivate students to engage in follow-up activities, the instructor reminds the students that they may benefit from networking with their respective "customers," and that following-up is a great way to initiate that relationship. Regardless of whether students engage in follow-up activity, the instructor helps the students understand the importance of follow-up through class discussion.

CONCLUSION OF THE PROJECT

Upon conclusion of the project, the primary objective of the instructor is to help students assimilate the knowledge they've gained from their experiences into their existing knowledge bases so that they are more readily able to engage in successful professional selling in the future. To enhance the assimilation process, the instructor initiates a class discussion about the experience, asking to students to express what they've learned about selling in general and each step of the sales process in particular. The instructor encourages the students to speak candidly and freely, but works to keep the discussion focused on learning. The instructor, either with or without prompting the students directly seeks to obtain answers to questions such as:

- ◆ How did your selling experience align with your expectations about selling prior to initiation of the project?
- ◆ What was your greatest challenge and how did you manage it?
- ◆ What was your greatest success and to what do you attribute that success?
- ◆ What role/value do relationships have in professional selling?
- ◆ If you were to do the project over again, what would you do differently?
- ◆ If asked by a recruiter, what would you say you learned from this experience that will help you professionally?

Students' answers to the above questions combined with their other thoughts and reflections help reinforce what they learned while doing the project and provide additional learning opportunities.

Recruiters in general, and especially sales recruiters, value experiences such as the ones provided by this project and seem to look favorably on students who have completed them. As an option, the instructor may encourage students to organize and record their thoughts to the above questions so that they may review them prior to the job interviewing process. Doing so provides yet another opportunity for the experiential learning project to pay dividends.

PROJECT EVALUATION

There are several ways to evaluate (grade) the project. Keep in mind that the incentive structure will likely drive behavior. Evaluation structures heavily weighted toward ticket sales may motivate students to find the easiest way to sell tickets (e.g., friends, family, themselves) without devoting time to engaging in the process. In contrast, evaluation structures heavily weighted toward the process may reduce students' motivation to "ask for the order" and actually accrue sales.

This NBA franchise suggested using the following outcome-based evaluation schema:

Outcome – Tickets Sold (units)	Grade
25 or more	A
20 – 24	B
15 – 19	C
10 – 14	D
Less than 10	F

Another option is to base the schema on dollar sales rather than tickets. The following table reflects such a structure.

Outcome – Tickets Sold ($)	Grade
$1,000 or more	A
$800 – $999	B
$600 – $799	C
$400 – $599	D
Less than $400	F

Given the goal of this project is to give students experience with the entire sales process, we have elected over the years not to use these evaluation methods. Instead, we use an evaluation method focusing on behaviors (process) and an extra non-grade incentive (prizes) based on outcomes.

The evaluation method we use includes completeness of the call reports and the number of calls made. Students who earn A's on the project make 20 or more sales calls and completely fill out all call reports and follow-up reports. Students who earn B's on the project make between 15–19 sales calls and turn in a majority of their reports satisfactorily. Generally there are some follow-up calls that are left undone and the call reports lack depth. Students who earn C's on the project make less than 10–15 calls and may or may not turn in complete call reports. Students completing fewer than 10 sales calls earn a D or F depending upon the completeness of the associated call reports.

To motivate students to sell tickets, we provide prizes to the top ticket sellers. Prizes include those donated by the sponsoring organization (e.g., NBA – tickets), other organizations, and/or purchased using funds donated by advisory board members, recruiters, or other sources. Students are told in advance that prizes would be awarded to the top three salespeople (in terms of dollar sales) and they are updated regularly on their rankings through the term of the project. With prizes and bragging rights on the line, students get quite competitive and look for ways to gain an edge. The use of the incentive program, along with the effects it has on motivation, represents another learning opportunity. The instructor can lead a discussion on the motivating effects of different types of rewards, and extent to which the awards and recognition influence behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

We have used the NBA franchise ticket sales project as a learning opportunity to help students understand and successfully navigate through the sales process. A professional sports team isn't necessary for this exercise to be successful. Over the years we've worked with our local civic theater (i.e., sold program ads and tickets), our university athletic department (i.e., sold program ads and tickets), and other organizations to accomplish the same task.

While success varies among the students, the class as a whole is generally successful. For example, a "sales force" of 30 students (average class size) will be make 450–500 sales calls. In general, those 450–500 sales calls generate plenty of successes (and some failures) with which the class shares and learns. With respect to the NBA franchise, our classes generate (sell) between $5,000 and $15,000 in ticket revenue per semester. The success stories are wonderful experiences for students to talk about in a job interview. Even when students do not sell any tickets, they can still talk about the challenges by faced while selling.

To really motivate the students, an incentive program should be added to this exercise. This NBA franchise has given us autographed basketballs, jerseys and pictures to be given away to our top sellers. In addition, through additional outside funding, we were able to purchase other prizes the students value and would like to earn. The record (with respect to our classes) for single semester sales is $17,000. Among the other prizes awarded, the top seller in that class received a $500 color television. Where possible, it is best to let the class codetermine the prizes (based on feasibility) at the beginning of the semester and then give regular updates as to who is in the lead. Finally, we found it worthwhile to give the prizes away at the end of the semester in front of the class (with food and beverages).

The impact of this experiential project on student learning is tremendous. To be sure, the act of engaging in selling behaviors in a real-world setting helps students

develop a better cognitive framework for learning more about sales. But our anecdotal evidence suggests the opportunity to reflect on those experiences, integrate those reflections into what they have (and are) learning, and then try new behaviors based on that integration has the biggest impact on learning. It is not uncommon for students successfully completing this project to experience moments of "if I had known then what I know now. . . ." Perhaps the greatest benefit of this project is that students successfully completing it have greater confidence (with respect to selling), are better salespeople, and have an experience recruiters recognize as valuable.

The project also provides benefits to the institution. The reputation of the sales program grows stronger because the very act of students contacting the community promotes the program, and the students usually exceed the expectations of the client organization (e.g., the NBA franchise). We use these accomplishments to help market our sales program to recruiters and potential donors. With some planning and a few phone calls (to local sports programs or other organizations), any instructor should be able to successfully implement this project. It is a wonderful learning experience for students and faculty.

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APPENDIX A

Prospecting Worksheet

Prospects with prior knowledge of prospect

1. Relationship

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Cold call prospects (no prior knowledge of prospect)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

NBA
Franchise
Logo

NBA
Franchise
Logo

Call Log

Name: _____

Company Name:	
Contact Name:	
Phone:	Receptionist's Name:
Email:	Fax:
Address:	
Notes:	

Company Name:	
Contact Name:	
Phone:	Receptionist's Name:
Email:	Fax:
Address:	
Notes:	

APPENDIX C

Assess	**Situation**
Discover	**Problems**
Activate	**Implications**
Project Problem Going Away	
Transition Question	**Need Pay Off**

Sales Resistance

1. Price is too high!

    Solution:

2. Seat location is not good!

    Solution:

3. Location and parking are inconvenient!

    Solution:

4. _____

    Solution:

5. _____

    Solution

APPENDIX E

SALES CALL REPORT
(Please Print or Type)

Date:_____

Sales Representative:_____

Person Contacted:_____

Company Contacted:_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____

Summary of Call:

Follow-up Activities

SALES CALL REPORT
(Please Print or Type)

Date:_____

Sales Representative:_____

Person Contacted:_____

Company Contacted:_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____

Summary of Call:

Follow-up Activities