Background

I used this project as a semester-long undergraduate project for my Promotional Management class and as an independent project for my graduate Strategic Marketing class. It has been successful in a face-to-face and online environments.

Students will learn the basics of Positioning as presented by the 'founders', Trout and Ries. They will then apply this to their own career goals by creating or improving their presence on LinkedIn.

Motivation

Students are exposed to the origins of Positioning theory. The chapters are short - allowing for a learning and application in 10 - 15 minutes per section. This fits well as a class opener - initiating a fun beginning to class. Students tend to come to class early and review the chapters before class, as the amount of reading is perfectly suited for quick review.

Students apply positioning theory to new products, progress to evaluating a specific companies positioning approach and finally internalize the theory and apply it to their own careers.

Learning Activities

(See attached file) This project begins with a series of short reading and writing assignments and ends with a comprehensive project of creating/refining a LinkedIn account that reflects the professional 'position' that each student wishes to achieve in his/her professional career.

I use ”Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind” by Al Ries and Jack Trout, any edition, for this assignment.

Students can purchase the book for less than $10 from Amazon (I often have a contest to see who can purchase the book for the least amount of $). This book is an “airplane book” - meaning a student can finish it on a flight from NY to LA. It is comprised of 25 short (5 minute read) chapters.

The capstone of this assignment requires a LinkedIn account.

I assign chapters 1 - 13 and chapter 23. This tends to keep the students' interest, as the remaining chapters are more industry/company specific and student enthusiasm tends to wane.

Face-to-face classes

I assign one chapter per class period. We discuss the marketing concept at the

Tips for Teaching

The examples in the Positioning book are old...some outdated. This is what provides for an excellent teaching opportunity. The students must develop examples of new companies that exemplify the positioning topic discussed by Trout and Ries (chapters 1 - 9). Chapters 11 & 12 are combined for a case study and are an excellent opportunity to discuss family (umbrella) branding.

I do not assign chapters 14 - 22 for the undergraduate classes. While informative, the other chapters are business/company specific and student interest tends to wane. However, these chapters serve for excellent case studies.

LinkedIn: If there are privacy concerns, students can set special privacy settings and discontinue the account after grading has occurred.

Chapter 2: Explosion of media. Following are useful links when discussing the proliferation of media.

Digital growth

iPad

ALL THINGS ADVERTISING: MULTI-SCREEN USAGE, BIG DATA, PROGRAMMATIC BUYING AND SUCCEEDING IN A CROWDED MARKETPLACE

POS 05: You can’t get there from here. The history of IBM is not readily
Positioning and LinkedIn - Marketing Technology

beginning of class (10 minutes). It is a great class opener.

Online classes

I assign the complete project at the beginning of the course. The work is arranged such that it is straight-forward and easy to complete independently.

Positioning and LinkedIn Assignment
Assignment and resources for Positioning and LinkedIn.

Klingensmith LinkedIn
"Go Full Throttle with LinkedIn" by Dawn Klingensmith. Promoting your career with LinkedIn

Impact of Use on Teaching and Learning

Students were assessed on providing answers and supporting them with information from Trout/Ries. Right versus wrong was a secondary consideration. I did not require formal writing in the student responses, which kept this assignment 'light' and added to the enjoyment and openness for discussion. This met my primary objective of students considering the topic of positioning in today's marketplace.

Attached are unedited responses (excerpts) from a 2014 undergraduate class.

Student responses 2014
Unedited excerpts from an undergraduate class (2014).

Reflections

This could easily be expanded to a session on resume writing. The headlines (LinkedIn) and positioning statements could be reflected on the students' qualifications sections non their resumes.

Chapter 2 discusses the proliferation of media - before the internet. With the advent of different viewing devices and habits, this area is ripe for additional research.