

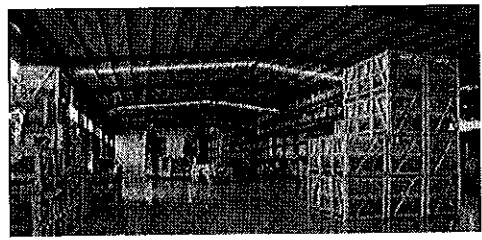


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FORWARD THINKING
Why marketing majors need to get out into the warehouse



By CSCMP/SCQ STAFF | From the Quarter 2 2007 Issue

Students with marketing degrees often enter the business world without understanding how supply chain practices affect marketing initiatives and strategies.

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Forget that field trip to the mall—marketing majors need to get out and visit a warehouse. That's because students with marketing degrees often enter the business world without understanding how supply chain practices affect marketing initiatives and strategies. But they should: Without the complex SCM processes that get the right products to the right place at the right time—and in the right condition—there would be little or no competitive advantage for marketers to exploit.

To remedy that educational shortcoming, University of Alabama professor Alexander Ellinger has developed a prescription for teaching the relevance and importance of supply chain service operations to tomorrow's marketing mavens.

In an article published in *Marketing Education Review*, Ellinger describes course content designed to make marketing students familiar with supply chain concepts and help them understand how SCM enables both cost and service advantages.

Ellinger says that business professors should highlight the congruence between the objectives of marketing—satisfying customers' needs and wants—and the objectives of supply chain management—linking all participants in a product's lifecycle to improve service levels and reduce costs. These two functions are complementary: Customer value is created through marketing and delivered through supply chain management.

In addition to reading about supply chain management principles and learning how to measure and analyze customer satisfaction, Ellinger suggests, students should visit a warehouse or distribution center as part of their education. This trip, and the report they write after their return to campus, will give students an appreciation of the complex processes and planning that occur at distribution centers.

Ellinger also recommends that small groups of students research and visit local companies to learn about and evaluate their supply chain operations. Each team will then give a presentation about its visit to the class. After watching multiple presentations, the class as a whole will gain a deeper appreciation of supply chain operations and how they support customer satisfaction. "Enabling students to view SCM operations through a marketing lens offers students a more comprehensive appreciation for their chosen field of study by highlighting the interdependence of marketing and SCM operations, the two corporate functions responsible for the provision of customer service," Ellinger writes.

Ultimately, he concludes, this approach to business education represents a step toward making the large cadre of marketing and general business students aware of the need for individuals with analytical skills, cross-functional awareness, and technological ability to help companies leverage service-delivery processes for competitive advantage.

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[Source: "Making Supply Chain Management Relevant For Marketing Majors," Alexander E. Ellinger, *Marketing Education Review*, Volume 17, Number 1 (Spring 2007)]