

PEER EVALUATION OF: Will Murphy

CONDUCTED BY: Dawn Dobni; Associate Professor, Department of Management & Marketing

CONDUCTED ON: January 11, 2011

On the above date I visited Will Murphy's MBA 833.2 class (Marketing for Organizational Decision Making) to conduct a peer review. The class ran from 6:30 pm-9:00 pm and was held in the boardroom of the K.W. Nasser Centre. It was attended by 29 students, the full class roster, all of whom stayed for the duration.

I had heard hallway talk about Will's tour de force teaching abilities, and I must say that he did not disappoint. He was ultra high energy, fast-paced, in your face (in a good way), and really very dramatic and charismatic. His students were riveted, inquisitive, and engaged, and it was likewise a treat for me to watch in action someone who has so expertly honed his teaching craft.

Will exhibited all of the qualities that make for outstanding teaching on key dimensions like rapport, delivery, knowledge/credibility, and organization/preparation. He demonstrated genuine interest, passion, and enthusiasm for the subject matter. He imparted knowledge and skills gained from personal business experience and explained terms and concepts with real-world business examples. He provided opportunity for in-class student-teacher and student-student interactivity and created a participatory learning environment. He encouraged and embraced questions from the audience and did a masterful job of answering them. He maintained a congenial demeanour, knew his students by name, and by his respectful interest in and attentiveness to them (pre, post, and during class) made everybody feel like a somebody. Will also has a real knack for using humour and capitalizing on humorous moments; there were many points at which the class erupted in hearty laughter.

In his teaching Will practices the marketing principles that he preached, knowing his audience and tailoring his message to their needs and expectations. For example, he indicated to me that the student mix in this class ranged from those with 30+ years work experience to neophytes fresh out of undergraduate school. He understood the need to make sure every member of this diverse set was able to get value from the class and have something to "take back to the office." This is a tricky balancing act, but I do think he got the formula right. I think he was also on the mark in using leading edge Harvard Business Review articles as the primary reading materials for the course.

In contrast to the linear approach many of us take when delivering lectures, Will served the subject matter to his students through a series of stories and anecdotes. He weaved an entertaining tale that demonstrated the linkages across various marketing tools and technologies while highlighting them individually. This approach made for a well-structured and organized learning environment but also one that seemed incredibly flexible. To his credit, Will is a story teller extraordinaire. He opens up and shares bits of himself, drawing on his personal and substantial work life experiences to animate the subject matter. We learned about Will's diaper-

buying travails (illustrating the downsides of customer confusion), the interesting and super-lucrative history of the Crest SpinBrush toothbrush (illustrating the mechanisms of product innovation), and the purple-dye Oreo fiasco (illustrating the importance of testing products close to the market).

Will effectively used repetition and mnemonics, making it impossible for students to miss his key takeaway messages. The importance of being on the constant lookout for OfIs (opportunities for improvement) is a lesson that will stay with them for life I am sure. He pummelled his students, and rightly so, with the need to think like a customer and manage each and every moment of truth with the customer. He was likewise relentless regarding the importance of strategic thinking and persistent innovation.

In the end, as all great teachers do, Will taught by example. His overarching message was that good marketers must understand value from the customer's point of view and develop a strategy to deliver it to them. On this day there is no doubt that Will delivered superior value to his students.

Respectfully,

Dawn Dobni