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# Digital Marketing: The Time for a New “Academic Major” Has Arrived

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## Abstract

The rapidly emerging digital economy is challenging the relevance of existing marketing practices, and a radical redesign of the marketing curriculum consistent with the emerging student and business needs of the 21st century is required. To remain relevant to our students and to the ultimate consumers of our output, businesses, the marketing curriculum must evolve with both the changing technological environment and the way marketing is perceived by its own academic architects. After an overview of recent marketing trends, this article describes the need for a fundamental change in the teaching of marketing in today's environment, performs a curriculum audit of existing digital marketing initiatives, and then details a new curriculum reflective of marketing in a digital age and an approach to implement it. Finally, the new major is discussed in the context of specific challenges associated with the new age of marketing. The approach developed here provides other universities a target to serve as one measure of progress toward a curriculum more in tune with the emerging digital environment.

## Keywords

digital marketing, Internet marketing, curriculum development, marketing education, marketing curriculum

In this article, I assert that new Internet and other digital technologies are not only transforming the practice of marketing but also the way we think about it, for example, mass markets are being replaced by markets of one, push marketing is being transformed into interactive permission marketing, fixed products are being replaced by inexpensive customized ones, fixed prices are often being replaced with auctions. There is still a hybrid of old and new; however, I concur with Wind and Mahajan (2001) who say the changes are real and irreversible. In response to these changes, I believe that to remain relevant universities need to offer a program, or at a minimum a course, in “Digital Marketing.” Technology has caused the marketing environment to dramatically change, with the end result that customers have gained, and begun to use, significant market power. Our students, the first digitally literate generation, are experiencing these changes firsthand and will likely be the generation to integrate marketing theory and practice in this area. Our mission as educators is to provide them the necessary tools, vocabulary, and expertise to embark on this journey. They must learn traditional marketing skills in this new context and create new mental models associated with the coevolution of consumers and business in a more socially mediated world.

Offering a Digital Marketing major presents significant challenges in course creation and teaching in this dynamically changing area. I have seen the majority of our internships and an increasing number of students' full-time jobs coming in the digital marketing area. The only way to

remain relevant and ensure the academic rigor associated with this emerging discipline is to experience and learn about the new environment as quickly as we can, use industry practitioner input where possible, and create a pedagogical plan that is flexible and can be modified when it seems appropriate.

This article demonstrates that the rapidly emerging digital economy is challenging the relevance of existing marketing practices and then proposes a model to radically redesign the marketing curriculum consistent with the emerging student and business needs of the 21st century. The model focuses on producing a well thought-out design of an ideal program. The complete redesign of the marketing curriculum has the benefit of producing clearly conceived and structured learning outcomes associated with the purposeful pursuit of knowledge rather than disjointed and fractured educational experiences associated with stand-alone courses that are often viewed as cash (and publicity) cows (Boyer, 1987; Gardiner, 1996; Underwood, 2009). Given the dramatic change in the environment, others, including Borin, Metcalf, and Tietje (2007), also see the need for a comprehensive

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redesign of the marketing curriculum, but their approach focuses on product and service innovation aspects.

I begin the curriculum redesign effort with a situational analysis of what is changing in the business and marketing environments since the introduction of the Internet. This sets the stage to discuss existing marketing programs and the difficulties they are facing in dealing with the rapidly emerging digital environment. Next, I present a proven model for curriculum change, followed by the design and implementation components of our new Digital Marketing major. This is followed by suggestions for what others in slightly different situations may do to increase relevance in their marketing curriculum and keep ahead of the technology curve.

### **The Emergence of Digital Marketing as an Area of Inquiry**

This section begins with a discussion of the evolution of marketing in the 21st century. I then define digital marketing. Next, I discuss its emerging role in business and demonstrate the need for it to be an area of academic inquiry.

#### *Marketing Evolution*

What we commonly think of as “marketing” has gone through fundamental change over the past decade, shifting from a narrow managerial/organizational focus to a much broader definition that acknowledges marketing’s role in other institutional contexts and in society in general (Petkus, 2010). The American Marketing Association (AMA) has changed its definition of marketing twice, in 2004 and 2007, with its most recent definition positioning marketing as an “activity” rather than a “function,” as a broader activity within the company or organization rather than just a department, and as creating long-term value rather than just an exchange of money. The new 2007 definition states, “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, 2007).

With the emergence of the Internet, technology-specific definitions of marketing have also been put forth, for example, “Internet marketing is a process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, and services that satisfy the customer” (Mohammed, Fisher, Jaworski, & Paddison, 2004, p. 4). The key differences between this definition and the 2007 AMA definition are the focus on building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities, the empowerment of customers.

Wind (2008) provides insight to the transition that is taking place when he states that our present thinking about marketing is bound by a set of core concepts, that is, marketing

as exchange, the four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), the three Cs (company, customers, and competitors), customer satisfaction, relationship marketing, permission marketing, and collaborative marketing. Each of these concepts is being challenged and changed by a world of empowered consumers, heightened competition, globalization, advances in technologies, and the interdependencies of these forces. Rethinking these core concepts is required if marketing is to have a seat at the corporate table in the coming years. Kelley and Bridges (2005) highlight the importance of quickly factoring these changes into the marketing curriculum when they assert that the requirements of the 21st century workforce directly affect what marketing educators teach their students. For example, in the area of market research, experimentation is rapidly replacing traditional survey and focus groups because it permits companies to test new ideas—and prices—in minutes and hours rather than weeks and months (Brynjolfsson & Schrage, 2009). Similarly, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in 2005 and in 2007 revised its skill development standard to ensure that the marketing curriculum more closely reflected the realities of the employment marketplace (Teer, Teer, & Kruck, 2007). Increasingly, firms require marketers to analyze and interpret the vast quantity of data generated from digitally recorded customer conversations (Baruch College, 2010). Spiller and Scovotti (2008) find that today major Internet companies lack qualified people to meet their employment demands and they assert that as applications using the Internet evolve, a new type of digitally savvy graduate will be required to meet the needs of the business.

#### *Digital Marketing Defined*

Digital marketing is an evolving concept; however, it is important to provide a clear and consistent definition of it here to serve as a foundation for the remaining analysis. The Digital Marketing Institute defines digital marketing as “the use of digital technologies to create an integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them” (Smith, 2007). Digital marketing includes both direct marketing, which treats customers as individuals and defines them not only by their individual characteristics but also by how they behave, and interactive marketing, which has the ability to address an individual and the ability to gather and remember the response of that individual (Deighton, 1996). Digital marketing also involves applying digital technologies, that is, web, e-mail, databases, mobile/wireless, and digital TV, to support interactive and noninteractive marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers within a multichannel buying process and customer lifecycle (Chaffey, 2010). Because the Internet

is only one technology and marketing is increasingly using other digital forms to serve customers, the term *digital marketing* seems to be more appropriate than the more limited term defined earlier, *Internet marketing*.

The first part of the digital marketing definition demonstrates the range of access platforms and communications tools that form the online channels that e-marketers use to build and develop relationships with customers. The access platforms deliver content and enable interaction through different online communication tools such as organizational websites, portals, search engines, blogs, e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging. Some also include traditional voice telephone as part of digital marketing. The second part of the description indicates that the main driver of digital marketing is the business returns from gaining new customers and maintaining relationships with existing customers, not the technology that drives digital marketing. The definition also emphasizes that digital marketing does not occur in isolation but is most effective when it is integrated with other communications channels such as phone, direct mail, or face-to-face. In fact, online channels could also be used to support the whole buying process from presale to sale to postsale and further development of customer relationships.

A key difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing is that the former uses digital technologies that are inherently measurable, permit conversations to be targeted, and facilitate the creation of relationships between customers and firms, whereas the latter is much more mass communication oriented. The number and ways of creating digital relationships and conversations with customers is growing exponentially, limited only by the imagination and entrepreneurial spirit of their creators (Alkhateeb, Clausen, Khanfar, & Latif, 2008).

The main uses of digital marketing to date have been Internet-based search marketing and digital advertising, banner ads. The former has been so successful because of its relevance to consumer inquiry, whereas the latter has been viewed as a necessary annoyance because it interrupts consumer conversations. The future of digital marketing will simply follow the customers wherever they may go. Today's trends seem to indicate that customers are increasingly mobile and social. Thus, the key to future marketing success is rather simple to articulate but much more difficult to implement: Get the customer the desired information when they want it and where they need it and avoid providing irrelevant informational clutter and violating their privacy concerns.

Digital marketing provides the critical bridge between customer digital touch points and digital conversation interfaces that firms use to provide relevant content to the customer. (See Figure 1 that displays these relationships.) The new Digital Marketing major has individual courses that focus on specific firm and customer dimensions associated with how these new digital touch points and interfaces can

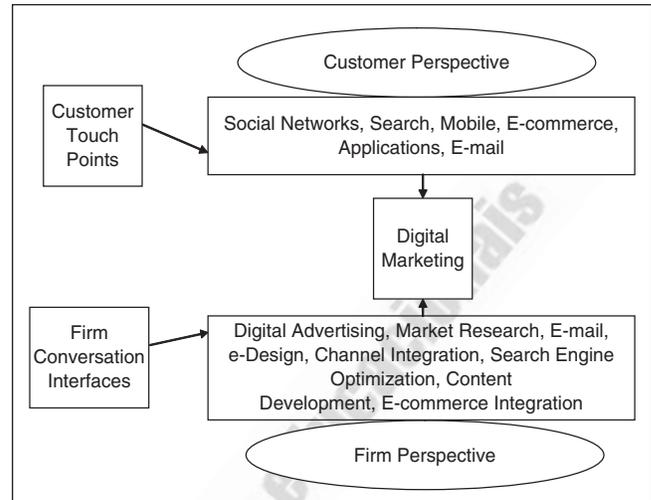


Figure 1. Digital marketing

be used to provide the desired information to customers when and where they demand it.

### The Reality of Digital Marketing in Business

As Wind and Mahajan (2001) said almost a decade ago, digital marketing is not traditional marketing on steroids, nor is it just a faster or newer channel but rather a new approach to marketing, that is, the digital revolution has fundamentally changed marketing at the core. Most certainly digital technology has opened new channels for selling products and services, but it also has put customers in charge, creating a fundamental shift in the dynamics of marketing. Digital marketing is about how best to communicate with customers, how to meet their changing needs, and how to build sustainable relationships and loyalty.

Marsey (2010) states,

It's hard to deny the power of digital marketing, with 190 million Americans now online and 58 percent of cell phones built with web capabilities. . . . Digital marketing is literally everywhere, all the time. When the Internet first emerged, it was all about the latest and greatest technologies and how to push products in the digital space.

Now, however, the focus is entirely back on the consumer.

In Levy (2010), "The State of Digital Marketing," Emily Reily of Forrester Research states that the heart of digital marketing is

where the conversation is happening with the consumer. That's where the consumer does its product

research, that's where they confide in each other and ask questions and make brand decisions. And so it's a very, very key part. Even if it doesn't command the highest dollar amount, it really should require the most critical thinking, because this is again where you're really going to make or break your relationship with your customer. . . . Everything is going to really become digital to some degree. Most people are going to have smart phones; most people are going to be able to access the Web from their TV. So the digital buy is going to kind of be the everything buy, (p. 1).

David Thomas of the SAS Institute states that

we may not yet have enough people dedicated to this (digital marketing) full-time, but I think we're doing a pretty good job of spreading the idea across the marketing organization to say this is something that everybody needs to be aware of and it needs to be part of the way that you do your job. (Levy, 2010, p. 5)

Pete Stein of Razorfish observed that "this was the year that the CEO wanted a special report on digital" (Levy, 2010, p. 2). Customers are spending increasing amounts of time in digital spaces, firms are sensing the need to increase knowledge of digital marketing throughout their organizations to respond to consumers' demands, and CEOs are becoming increasingly aware of the effects of digital marketing.

### **Need Justification for Digital Marketing in Academia**

The justification for digital marketing as an academic area is predicated on three conjectures: (a) The traditional marketing curriculum does not provide students the necessary skills to analyze—buying behavior implications associated with the changing power relationships between customers and the firms, the exponential growth of recorded customer/firm interactions, and the use of experiments instead of market research to gain customer insight. (b) The digital economy is real and not a passing fad—in 2008, online consumer sales totaled \$250 billion, B2B e-commerce was \$3.5 trillion (Laudon & Traver, 2009); in 2010, Facebook had more than 500 million registered users and more than 30 billion pieces of content shared monthly for its social networking site (Facebook, 2010; Halkias, 2010), and the spending on online advertising in the United Kingdom had for the first time surpassed spending on TV advertising, that is, spending is the ultimate litmus test of where an industry is in embracing a particular channel (DMI [Digital Marketing Institute], 2010). (c) Marketing as a discipline has become less relevant to business. With regard to the last conjecture, it is helpful to ask and answer three related questions: (a) Does the emerging,

connected, digital economy have fundamental implications on how firms create and maintain customer relationships, interact with marketing partners, and satisfy customers' needs? (b) Has the marketing curriculum of our universities kept up with the relevance and vigor associated with the ambiguous, uncertain, rapidly changing marketplace faced by marketing executives? (c) Can our students articulate the marketing implications of the proliferation of new media and channels, empowered customers, and fragmentation of markets? If you believe that the answer to the first question is yes and the next two are no, as I do, then as marketing educators we have both the responsibility and the charge to do something about it.

One such educator, Wind (2008), who has followed marketing trends for more than 40 years, incorporates many of the above-mentioned dynamics when he asserts that the world in which marketing operates has fundamentally changed, that is, marketing research and practice has not kept up, and at the heart of the current trouble is a severance of academic rigor from managerial relevance. He proposed seven strategies that can increase both rigor and relevance of marketing: (a) bridge the disciplinary silos, for example, work with finance to better define customer lifetime value; (b) shift from traditional management to network orchestration, for example, the need to connect with markets, customers, and resources across boundaries of enterprises and nations; (c) change the focus from customer relationship management to customer managed relationships and cocreate solutions with customers; (d) shift from company-branded products to customer-branded solutions, for example, offer integrated solutions such as Nike did with Apple, with music for runners; (e) use analytics and metrics as glue, for example, increase the rigor of marketing and create business intelligence; (f) adopt an experimentation philosophy in all activities and strive for empirical generalization, for example, adaptive experimentation; and (g) challenge and change your mental models, for example, think of new ways to empower customers. These areas are quite far reaching and serve as good measuring sticks to evaluate the relevance and rigor of any new curriculum. To gain a better understanding of the state of digital marketing in today's economy and to serve as basis for our analysis, I conducted an audit of digital marketing academic activity among other colleges and universities (Tippins, 2004).

### **Digital Marketing Curriculum Audit—2010**

A review of the top 10 marketing undergraduate programs in the United States reveals some interest in the digital marketing area, with 7 of the 10 programs having at least one related course ("Best colleges' specialty rankings: Undergraduate business specialties: Marketing," 2010). (See Table 1 that

**Table 1.** Top 10 Undergraduate Marketing Programs and Digital Marketing–Related Courses

Courses	No Course	Digital Marketing	Law of E-Commerce	Data Mining	Design of E-Business Systems	Electronic Commerce	Direct Response and Internet Marketing	Digital Advertising	Social Media
Wharton—University of Pennsylvania			X						
University of Michigan		X							
University of Texas				X					
University of California Berkeley					X				
University of North Carolina	X								
University of Indiana		X							
University of Wisconsin	X								
New York University		X							
University of Virginia						X			
University of Southern California							X		

lists course areas of digital marketing classes at these institutions.) The course has many different names but usually contains one or more of the following terms (*Internet, web design, digital*) coupled with the term *marketing*. A review of the course descriptions obtained from the schools' websites revealed the main topic areas to be a general overview of digital marketing, web design, and/or web analytics. However, the creation of a given digital marketing course within a university appeared to be opportunistic. It seemed that wherever a university had a faculty member with an interest and related area of expertise, a digital marketing course was created; for example, if the related expertise was in Computer Information Systems, then a web design course was created; if it was in Advertising, then a digital advertising course was created, and so on. To increase the breadth of digital marketing audit, I took a random sample of small, large, and private business schools listed in the *Fiske Guide to Colleges 2010* (Fiske, 2010) and compared these programs. I was not surprised to find that large and private business schools have slightly more digital marketing offerings than small counterparts, but none have what I would call an extensive cluster of courses. In 2008, the Direct Marketing Educational Foundation performed an analysis of schools that had Internet marketing programs and found that there were 5 undergraduate programs (only 1 offered a BBA degree, Dowling College in Oakdale, New York); 17 masters programs, of which 3 were MBA and 33 certificate/specialization undergraduate programs; and 131 offered Internet-related course programs (DMEF, 2008).

Many of the top marketing universities have more extensive digital marketing offerings at the MBA level. One possible explanation is that there is greater demand by students for course relevance when they are looking to augment their

business career than when they are first starting out. Similarly, executive education has a greater variety of digital marketing courses. Columbia University had an Internet Marketing and Global Business course in its executive MBA a decade ago, whereas Harvard now offers a course titled "Taking Marketing Digital" that "explores social networking, mobile marketing, online communities, viral marketing, wikis, and blogs, you will learn how to build brands in a highly networked world" (Harvard Business School, 2010). NYU School for Continuing and Professional Studies offers a concentration in "Digital Marketing" and "Marketing Analytics" in its MS program.

In general, it appears that urban universities in 2010 tend to offer more digital marketing courses than their rural counterparts. For example, New York City academic institutions, possibly because of their closeness to Silicon Alley (new media center carved out during the dot.com boom), as well as the established midtown Manhattan media cluster, have shown the greatest interest in the digital marketing area. Both demand and supply factors come into play; the media center provides a fertile ground for adjuncts to teach new courses and students are more aware of emerging trends and populate these courses. In addition to the NYU and Columbia initiatives, Pace University has an undergraduate program in "E-Business and Interactive Media Concentration" that has two specific Internet-related courses, "Strategic Internet Marketing" and "Multimedia Applications for the Computer." Baruch College/CUNY has a "Digital Marketing" track with eight distinct Internet-related courses (that cover each category in Table 1), five of which focus in the marketing discipline. The Direct Marketing Association, also located in New York City, is an industry trade group that has dozens of seminars and online courses for a fee. Not

surprising, there are also several for-profit universities offering a complete array of online digital marketing courses. Two of the most well known are Full Sail University and DeVry University. It can be noted that these offerings have to be in tune with the marketplace and offer relevant courses, because that is their sole selling point and main source of revenue. The above audit indicates that many schools have a limited number of stand-alone digital marketing courses. If the desire is to create a new, ideal program from scratch, one would be prudent to create a formal procedure and curriculum model to guide the process.

## Curriculum Model

A review of literature indicated that there is no shortage of models that could be used for curriculum redesign (Borin & Metcalf, 2010; Cheng, 1994; Cook, 1993; Koohang, Riley, Smith, & Floyd, 2010; Tippins, 2004). I chose to use the Association of the Computer Machinery/Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers–Information Technology (ACM/IEEE-IT) undergraduate curriculum model as our guide because of its proven track record and because of the similarities of the fields of information technology and digital marketing (ACM/IEEE, 2008). Both require an understanding of technologies and the manipulation of information to serve a business purpose (Morello, 2005; Rubel, 1996).

This model is simple in design and consists of two phases. Phase I involves the design of the framework that encompasses formulating the program mission, program accreditation, establishing career goals, and establishing program competencies. Phase II focuses on the design of specific courses in the curriculum and includes the design of foundation and advanced courses (Koohang et al., 2010).

## Curriculum Design

The process used for curriculum design for the Digital Marketing major follows the two-phased ACM/IEEE-IT model.

### Phase I

The mission of the Marketing Department at our university is to educate students for fulfilling careers in marketing, that is, helping the organization acquire customers and creating value for them. The Digital Marketing major is consistent with the Department's mission and became a stand-alone "accredited" program after it was approved by the school and college curriculum committees, thus fulfilling the accreditation phase.

If marketing is to lead in the development of customer insight in the new digital environment, it must reexamine all concepts, methods, and practices for appropriateness and relevance (Wind & Mahajan, 2001). As I demonstrated in the "The Reality of Digital Marketing in Business" section, the

changed business environment has created a need for digital marketing education. One example, market research, can highlight this change. Historically, market research studies were designed and executed and firms would get customer intention results in about 6 months. Firms such as Amazon can now place features on websites and tell within hours how customers respond. Experiments are becoming far more pervasive and persuasive as information technology improves and testing grows faster and cheaper, resulting in huge changes for corporate cultures that will embrace speed. I assert that market research courses must incorporate these new techniques to remain relevant. But this is just one course that is illustrative of the fundamental change that is occurring, I suggest that much greater, widespread design change is necessary for marketing to remain relevant to students and firms employing those students.

In many ways, we can use business organizational responses to the evolving digital environment as a curriculum guide. New career areas and new categories of jobs in digital marketing indicate where firms have already made resource commitments. If we as academics want to remain relevant to business, it would behoove us to create courses that provide our students with basic levels of knowledge to address many of these critical areas of business. See Appendix A for a list of where digital marketing careers exist and the new categories of jobs specific to digital marketing. In April 2010 at a Baruch Digital Marketing Conference in New York City (Baruch College, 2010), the two largest advertising agencies in the world, the largest software manufacturer, and the most profitable Internet firm all indicated that they had done significant hiring in the digital marketing area during the recession of 2008/2009 and still had hundreds of unfilled jobs. Experienced talent, not economics, appears to be the constraining factor in the digital marketing area.

The last area associated with Phase I is establishing program goals and competencies, that is, the knowledge and skills students should have by the time they complete the program. Our goal for the Digital Marketing major is to provide students with a relevant educational experience consistent with the emerging environment that promotes competence in the emerging field of digital marketing and the capacity for career success. As indicated previously, the basic need driving the above goal revolves around the rapidly changing, technology-mediated consumer experience that places greater emphasis on digital data and firm/customer relationships.

Because I am introducing a new discipline, a learning sequence could be developed that moved the students along Bloom's cognitive goals hierarchy (Bloom, 1956), that is, introductory courses have to provide basic knowledge facts of the digital environment; students next have to comprehend how traditional marketing differs from digital marketing, particularly in the area of gaining customer insight; then

new data reduction techniques have to be understood and then applied in new ways to analyze consumer behavior. This is then followed by new research techniques and data models being combined and synthesized to solve marketing problems. Ultimately, the new digital marketing approaches have to prove to be more responsive to customers' demands than previous methods. After completing the program, I expect students to have the competencies associated with the learning goals in Appendix B.

## Phase II

For about 4 months, I discussed core and specialized digital marketing topics with industry trade organizations, major digital advertising firms, software firms, academics from other universities, and officers from several digital start-ups and each provided thoughts on what was required. A core group of four to six industry people and two to three academic people refined the proposal and eventually produced a draft curriculum in about 5 months.

Most of the earlier discussions of our group involved what core courses should be part of the new Digital Marketing major. The "existing" marketing core was typical of many marketing programs around the country and had a market research course, a consumer behavior course, an international business course, and a marketing strategy course. The industry representatives strongly lobbied for a web analytics course in the digital marketing core. They argued that the explosion of marketing data demanded that students who graduated with a Digital Marketing degree had to have the ability to analyze the rapidly growing quantity of data generated by digital technologies. (See learning goals associated with Web Analytics and Intelligence in Appendix B.) We in the academic community felt that there was a need for an introductory course in digital marketing to set the stage for the more advanced courses as well as to provide all majors with a common understanding of the discipline's domain. (See learning goals associated with Internet Marketing in Appendix B.) A major at our university requires eight classes in the functional area, so the addition of two more required courses to the existing four-course core was not feasible because we wanted our students to have some flexibility to specialize in areas of their interest. We chose to eliminate from the core the International Business course because it did not relate directly to digital marketing and there was a precedent—several years earlier International Business was eliminated from the Advertising track. After taking the required course, Principles of Marketing, the Digital Marketing major has four required core courses that cover the basics of both traditional and digital marketing. The four courses are Market Research, modified to include coverage of Internet experimentation; Internet Marketing, an overview course reflective of the Internet Marketing

paradigm; Web Analytics and Intelligence, a quantitative course to interpret data and create market intelligence for decision makers; and Marketing Strategy, an information intensive capstone course that will address a digital marketing problem and create a professional marketing plan. Next, students must choose, based on their interest, whether to learn basics of buying behavior from a consumer or business perspective. To complete the major, students then must choose three specialized digital marketing electives that can be tailored to their interests. A complete list of courses is provided in Appendix C.

Students can take three specialized digital marketing courses to carve out an area of expertise in the rapidly emerging digital marketing area. The areas, careers, and associated courses are as following:

- Area: Consumer Behavior in Digital Marketing
  - Careers: Direct and Interactive Marketing, Digital Advertising
    - Courses: Direct and Interactive Marketing, Digital Advertising, e-Business Technologies
- Area: International Supply Chain Management
  - Careers: Supply Chain Management and B-2-B Marketing
    - Courses: Internet Law, Innovation, Technology, and the Global Enterprise (B-2-B), Business Buying Behavior
- Area: Digital Entrepreneurship
  - Career: Entrepreneurs
    - Courses: Social Media Marketing and New Ventures, Direct and Interactive Marketing, Digital Advertising, Consumer Behavior or Business Buying Behavior

Curriculum design is necessary and must occur before implementation; however, implementation can be problematic if not properly sequenced.

## Curriculum Implementation

According to Diamond (1997), the implementation of the proposed curriculum change requires many factors to be aligned, most notable, a solid base of instructional talent must be available, and the current curriculum must fill a knowledge gap.

For illustrative purposes, I share how we addressed each of these factors as they occurred at our school. A full-time faculty member, who created three courses for an Electronic Commerce concentration at the MBA level a decade earlier, led the effort and we had adjunct faculty who continued to teach these Internet-related courses. The knowledge gap was most obvious to the students who grew up with digital technology and had oversubscribed our single Internet marketing

course, the marketing internship coordinator who placed over half of all his marketing internships in digital marketing areas, and the local companies who were seeking better trained digital marketing undergraduates to employ.

In addition to the necessary conditions for curriculum change identified above, there have to be sufficient conditions to create a tipping point for change (Gladwell, 2000). At our school, the two main internal forces driving curriculum change process were market dynamics and strong leadership (Borin et al., 2007). Our college is one of the largest business schools in the nation and we are located in the media capital of the world, New York City. After we created a proposal, one of the largest advertising agencies, The Interpublic Group, decided to partner with our college to increase the depth and breadth of international and Internet marketing graduates. We had documented the need and aligned many key factors required for the program to be a success: student interest and industry need, a willing industry coparticipant, a potential leader with curriculum experience and digital marketing experience, and support from upper management. Even after we executed the aforementioned implementation plan, we still faced two additional constraints involving the uneasy tension between the broader academic community and industry.

Reibstein, Day, and Wind (2009) highlight the growing gap between the interests, standards, and priorities of academic marketers and the needs of marketing executives. Executives and their business problems seem to be centered on the rapidly evolving digital marketing world; however, academics appear not to be listening to marketers' needs and on occasion have been accused of talking to themselves and engaging in research driven by the tenure process (Underwood, 2009). Here, I encourage marketing academics to expand their focus, to seek out important problems in the evolving digital marketplace, and to have an impact on the practice of marketing. If we are to remain good marketers ourselves, we must understand that employers are the clients to whom we must ultimately provide value.

Teer et al. (2007) found that there is a need for academic and practitioner partnerships to determine what knowledge and skills our students need and what level of expertise is desired for entry-level employees. However, they observed (particular to database marketing, but likely to be present in all of digital marketing) as a major problem in this area the difficulty in finding individuals with appropriate skills needed to teach these courses. Even if industry professionals are available to be hired as adjuncts, members of the marketing department must perform the critical leadership role of guiding the creation of courses and course content and ensuring that the program meshes from a rigor (theory) and relevance (practice) perspective. The teaching of these digital courses has some pluses and minuses, for example, it is hard to play the traditional professor "sage on the stage" role when the course content is rapidly evolving, but it is much easier to be

relevant with the students when you are helping them learn about something that they use on a daily basis for fun. Both teachers and students must engage in continuous learning.

## Curriculum Evaluation

As indicated above, the basic marketing education structure seems to remain the same; however, the content of what we teach in it must change to reflect the current environment and changes in relative power between consumers and businesses. I now compare and test whether our new Digital Marketing major addresses Wind's seven specific design elements associated with the new age of customer empowered marketing. The detailed results of this analysis provided in Appendix D indicate that the new Digital Marketing major is quite responsive to each of Wind's seven strategies. This tight fit indicates that the new major is both relevant to business coping in the new digital age and exhibits vigor in the breadth and depth of the areas covered.

## Strategy and Tactics for Marketing Educators: Curriculum Recommendations

A major contribution of this article is to provide a template for marketing educators on how to create and structure a digital marketing offering that is both responsive to needs of the business community and positions students with requisite skills to take advantage of these opportunities. This journey was not without challenges that many of you will likely encounter if you choose a similar path. For that reason, we briefly state them and then provide strategic and/or tactic responses to each.

### *Challenge 1: Is the Area of Marketing Experiencing a Fundamental Change?*

This first challenge, in many ways, is most important because if it is not adequately addressed the others are moot. I have shown support for the statement that digital marketing is not traditional marketing on steroids, nor is it just a faster or newer channel but rather a new approach to marketing, that is, the digital revolution has fundamentally changed marketing at the core. A key difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing is that the former uses digital technologies that are inherently measurable, permits conversations to be targeted, and facilitates the creation of relationships between customers and firms, whereas the latter is much more mass communication oriented. The number and ways of creating digital relationships and conversations with customers is growing exponentially, limited only by the imagination and entrepreneurial spirit of their creators. Digital marketing

is literally everywhere, all the time, it is where the conversation is happening with the consumer and as such represents a fundamental and irreversible change in marketing.

### **Challenge 2: Is There a Business Need for a Digital Marketing Offering?**

I have highlighted several key trends that address this challenge. The traditional marketing curriculum does not provide students the necessary skills to analyze: buying behavior implications associated with the changing power relationships between customers and the firms, the exponential growth of recorded customer/firm interactions, and the use of experiments instead of market research to gain customer insight. Nor does the curriculum have courses that take into account the way firms in the new digital economy create and maintain customer relationships, interact with marketing partners, and satisfy customers' needs. These voids are compounded by the fact that the digital economy is quite large and growing, for example, more than 3.0 trillion dollars in commerce in 2008 and in 2010 more than 500 million people sharing 30 billion pieces of content monthly on just one social networking site. In 2008, there were only 5 undergraduate programs, 17 master programs, 33 certificate programs, and 131 academic institutions that offered digital marketing courses attempting to fill this void (DMEF, 2008).

### **Challenge 3: Has Business Input Influenced the Curriculum Development?**

We have met with industry representatives throughout the development process and they have provided invaluable feedback. After we created the program in spring 2010, we held a conference where major technology companies, Google and Microsoft, and advertising firms GroupM of the WPP group, R/GA of the Interpublic Group, and Incisive Media, provided their assessment of our digital marketing offering. What we heard was a consistent message: Their clients were increasingly spending a greater portion of their advertising budget on digital advertising and they demanded better web analytics and greater measurement of return on their expenditures. The conference can be viewed at <http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/dml/engine.php?action=viewAsset&mediaIndex=1138>.

### **Challenge 4: Is There an Evolution Path to Introduce Digital Marketing Into a School's Curriculum, That Is, What Courses Should Be Offered and When?**

The complete redesign of the marketing curriculum has the benefit of producing clearly conceived and structured

learning outcomes associated with the purposeful pursuit of knowledge rather than disjointed and fractured educational experiences associated with stand-alone courses; however, few institutions will likely have the resources and/or the organizational capabilities to do this all at once. I believe that the next best approach is to use the curriculum redesign discussed in this article as a final product and for each institution to create its own evolutionary path. Many institutions may choose to replicate the learning sequence we used that starts with an introductory course to provide basic knowledge of the digital environment, followed by a course describing how traditional marketing differs from digital marketing particularly in the area of gaining customer insight and market research, and then offers a course in new data reduction techniques and how they can be understood and applied in new ways to analyze consumer behavior. This is then followed by elective courses that address specific applications of digital marketing to the business world, for example, Digital Advertising, Social Media and Small Business Entrepreneurship, Direct and Interactive Marketing, Law and the Internet, and so on.

### **Challenge 5: What Happens If Existing Faculty Do Not Possess the Needed Skill Set to Teach These New Digital Marketing Courses?**

One effective approach involves creating technology champions within your department to enhance the technology diffusion process and using faculty mentoring and workshops. These technology diffusion leaders would likely be the ones to create the first digital marketing courses and eventually create a curriculum of related courses. This is what happened in our university. The AMA has recognized the need for education in this area and has put together a training series to address this very problem. For the first half of 2010, they had seven live presentations and interactive forums, for example, Marketing Metrics and Dashboards, 2.0—the next generation in marketing, measurement, analytics, and resource allocation (AMA, 2010). Another option is to attend AMA and Direct and Interactive Marketing Association annual meetings where digital marketing topics are widely discussed. A third option is to read journals on this subject such as the *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. An increasing number of traditional marketing journals such as *Journal of Marketing Education* and magazines such as *Marketing Management* are including more digital marketing articles in them, and a large number of podcasts and web seminars are increasingly available. A fourth option is to become tech savvy and play with the new technology as it becomes available. A fifth option is to put together and teach a digital marketing course; learning by doing is a great educational experience.

### **Challenge 6: What Should I Look For in Hiring Someone To Teach a Digital Marketing Course?**

The understanding and teaching of digital marketing requires the combination of several skill sets. First, faculty must understand the digital technology and how that is creating an array of new media forms that facilitate customer communication. Second, he or she must be able to translate digital technology potential into marketing and psychological concepts and be able to compare and contrast what is new and what is similar with existing marketing concepts. Third, he or she must have or develop (or read about) established interfaces with practitioners to fully understand what is happening in the market among marketing executives, advertising agencies, and consultants and how they are attempting to reach customers in new and interesting ways. The hiring of industry professionals as adjuncts has proven successful for our university; members of the marketing department, however, must perform the critical leadership role of guiding the creation of courses and course content and ensuring that the program meshes from a rigor (theory) and relevance (practice) perspective.

### **Challenge 7: What Forms of Assessment Are Taking Place With the New Curriculum?**

The assessment of success or failure of the program is first whether the digital marketing courses fill and then whether our students successfully find employment. Over the past couple of years, I have seen over half to almost two thirds of our marketing students getting internships in the digital marketing space even though most had little or no digital marketing classes. We have had success at the MBA level in placing students (who either took digital marketing courses or obtained our digital marketing certificate) in digital marketing jobs, with a dozen graduates placed with Microsoft alone. With regard to relevance, we plan to create an industry advisory group, and we will solicit feedback each year from our students with an end-of-semester evaluation for all our courses.

### **Conclusion**

This article demonstrates that the rapidly emerging digital economy is challenging the relevance of existing marketing practices and a radical redesign of the marketing curriculum consistent with the emerging student and business needs of the 21st century is required. To remain relevant to our students and to the ultimate consumers of our output, businesses, the marketing curriculum must evolve with both the changing technological environment and the way marketing is perceived by its own academic architects. Reibstein et al.

(2009) highlight the growing gap between the interests, standards, and priorities of academic marketers and the needs of marketing executives.

The digital marketing major discussed here is my attempt to bridge this relevancy gap. I believe that the courses created and our curriculum approach meet the needs of business, our students, and the marketing academic community. I think the approach is appropriate and suitable for other universities; however, I realize that many may choose an evolutionary path toward digital marketing, so I outlined a phased implementation approach to the Digital Marketing major. Our approach provides other universities a target, end state, to serve as one measure of progress toward a curriculum more in tune with the emerging digital environment. Another such measure that they could use to evaluate progress in the digital marketing area is to see how their current curriculum offering maps into the seven strategies that Wind (2008) identifies as critical in increasing both rigor and relevance of marketing in the fundamentally changed digital world. As indicated in Appendix D, our digital marketing curriculum appears to be quite responsive and addressed each of Wind's seven strategies.

The digital marketing curriculum audit reported earlier seems to indicate that many universities, more than 130 in 2008, are beginning to offer a limited number of digital marketing courses. I hope that they, and many more of the non-adopters, can use what I have shared to guide their offering and, as such, increase the business relevance of marketing in the digital age.

## **Appendix A**

### **Business Identified Careers and Jobs**

#### Digital marketing—Career areas

- New media and digital media agencies
- Advertising agencies
- E-business and e-commerce companies
- Companies providing online marketing—related products and services
- Corporate employers recruiting for in-house online marketing—related jobs
- Search engine marketing and search engine optimization (SEO)
- Digital public relations

#### Digital marketing—Specific jobs

- Advanced analytics
- Application development
- Client services
- Creative
- Digital media services
- Rich media
- Strategy

Note. Adapted from "Digital marketing jobs" (2010).

## Appendix B

### Learning Goals and Proficiency Exercises for Substantially New Digital Marketing Courses

Course	Learning Goals	Task/Exercise
Internet Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how the Internet affects the breadth and depth of a firm's overall marketing strategy.</li> <li>• Identify strategic and operational aspects of information-based marketing programs on the Internet:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For a variety of products and services</li> <li>b. In both consumer and business markets</li> <li>c. In countries around the globe</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Recognize how the Internet has affected and created key Internet marketing levers (product, pricing, communication, community, distribution, and branding) and demonstrate how online and offline levers can be combined to achieve marketing goals.</li> <li>• Gain Internet marketing skills through written and oral assignments.</li> </ul>	Create a marketing plan using the marketplace matrix and show how marketing levers are used to build customer relationships for a particular product.
Social Media Marketing and New Ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the emerging social media "ecosystem" and how the social media phenomenon relates to business.</li> <li>• Define and categorize how social networking transforms personal and professional relationships.</li> <li>• Identify a social media opportunity that can be turned into a new venture.</li> </ul>	Create a business plan for a social media new venture opportunity.
Marketing Web Analytics and Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how Web analytics can affect the breadth and depth of a firm's overall marketing strategy.</li> <li>• Recognize strategic and operational aspects of Web analytics' tools and technologies:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For a variety of products and services</li> <li>b. In both consumer and business markets</li> <li>c. In countries around the globe</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Discuss examples of how Web analytics can influence and create new marketing levers.</li> <li>• Interpret how new marketing levers influence customer relationships, brand response, and, potentially, sales.</li> <li>• Relate web analytic knowledge and skills through written and oral assignments.</li> </ul>	Analyze the data from a website, identify appropriate analytics, and create a report that provides a market strategy recommendation.
Digital Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach customers with relevant digital advertising.</li> <li>• Design effective online ads.</li> <li>• Budget online advertising and the risks of underallocating.</li> <li>• Integrate online advertising with the "traditional" parts of a campaign; achieve marketing objectives—from lead generation to retention and loyalty.</li> <li>• Measure the effectiveness of Internet ads and campaigns.</li> <li>• Leverage consumer behavior in digital channels to construct advertising objectives.</li> <li>• Prepare campaign tracking and analysis for a digital advertising campaign.</li> </ul>	Apply best practices to create compelling digital advertising campaigns from both creative and media perspectives.
Direct and Interactive Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the strategic objectives that can be met with direct and interactive marketing.</li> <li>• Identify the media used to deliver direct and interactive marketing campaigns.</li> <li>• Describe best practices for direct and interactive marketing.</li> <li>• Identify the sources of information used in direct and interactive marketing.</li> <li>• Describe the analytic techniques and tools used in direct and interactive marketing.</li> <li>• Evaluate direct and interactive marketing campaigns.</li> </ul>	Create a direct and interactive market plan to accomplish a strategic objective and then use analytics to evaluate that plan.
Social Media Technologies in Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, describe, and explain today's Web 2.0-based social media technologies in the interconnected corporate environment.</li> <li>• Identify, describe, and explain the impact of these social media technologies on corporate and nonprofit organizations.</li> <li>• Recognize the ways in which social media can be incorporated into the corporate structure and provide an organization with competitive advantage.</li> <li>• Recognize the ways in which advances in information technology must be informed by considerations of privacy, confidentiality, and professional ethics.</li> <li>• Conduct online and library research, present the results of this research to the class, and demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a group.</li> </ul>	Generate a plan that shows how a firm can use social media to enhance a particular strategic objective without violating privacy concerns.

## Appendix C

### Listing and Description of Courses

#### Core courses

MKT 3600	Marketing Research
MKT 4123	Marketing Web Analytics and Intelligence <sup>a</sup>
MKT 4555	Internet Marketing
MKT 5750	Marketing Strategy

#### Additional required course (3 credits)

MKT 3605	Consumer Behavior
or	
MKT 4700	Business Marketing Management

Elective courses—Choose three courses (9 credits) from the following, two of which must be marketing (MKT) or international business (IBS) courses.

MKT 4151	Direct and Interactive Marketing <sup>a</sup>
MKT 4557	Digital Advertising <sup>a</sup>
MKT 4460	International Supply Chain Management
MKT 4966	Social Media Marketing and New Ventures <sup>a</sup>
IBS 3000	Innovation, Technology, and the Global Enterprise
CIS 3444	e-Business Technologies
CIS 3630	Principles of Web Design
LAW 3108	Law and the Internet
LAW 3118	Law of Unfair Competition and Intellectual Property
MGT 4967	Technology, Innovation, and Design in Entrepreneurship

a. New or substantially modified courses for the major.

## Appendix D

### Curriculum Evaluation Based on Wind's Seven Criteria

- Bridge the disciplinary silos.
  - The design of the Digital Marketing major is interdisciplinary in nature. Depending on their interest, students can take courses in law, entrepreneurship, or computer and information science to complement their marketing knowledge.
  - If students, via coursework, understand the language and basic principles of the traditional business silo areas, they will more likely seek them as partners, rather than avoid them, when they enter the business world.
  - The major, particularly in the core courses, stresses both behavioral and quantitative approaches to addressing marketing questions. The major also strongly encourages the student to take internships so that they can see firsthand how academic training and practitioner experience mesh in the real world.
- Shift from traditional management to network orchestration.
  - Our students increasingly understand the power of networking each time they log in to their Facebook accounts.
  - The importance and power of networks is addressed in several of our courses, for example, Social Media Marketing and New Ventures and the Supply Chain Management course. Most of the courses have group projects, where students must learn to work in small, networked groups.
- Change in focus from customer relationship management to customer managed relations.
  - A key facet of the digital marketing definition, and its major difference from the AMA definition, is the importance of the creation of relationships with customers.
  - Companies have wasted much money in failed attempts to manage customer relations. Relationships are not to be managed by one party but rather relationships must codevelop with both parties adding mutual value.
  - The coevolving of relationships is the main focus of the core Internet Marketing course as well as the Digital Advertising and Direct and Interactive Marketing classes.
- Shift from company-branded products to customer-branded solutions.
  - Unlike in the pre-Internet world where companies sold products to customers, now customers have more power and choices. Drucker (2003) notes that "the customer has the information" and "whoever has the information has the power."
  - Rather than treating customers as an exogenous group, they are increasingly looked on as a part of the firm and participants in the value creation process. Now customers do their banking online, find information with search engines, assemble their furniture, and participate in the new product development processes.
  - Two of the most successful online businesses, EBay and Google, have experienced huge growth because they empower the consumer.
  - These concepts come through clearly in the core Internet Marketing class and are re-enforced in the Digital Advertising class.
- Use analytics and metrics as glue.
  - The Forrester Research Group estimated that the market for Web analytics would be roughly \$431 million in the United States in 2009, growing at a rate of 17% between now and 2014 (Lovett, 2009).
  - Today, a majority of companies are dramatically underinvested in analyzing data flowing from

- digital channels. Even when business managers have committed money to measurement technology, they usually fail to apply commensurate resources and effort to make the technology work for their business.
- c. Today, most organizations focus too much on generating reports and too little on producing true insights and recommendations, opting for what is easy, not for what is valuable to the business.
  - d. In the Web Analytics and Intelligence course, we investigate how digital analytics can play a greater role in future business decision making.
6. Adopt the adaptive experimentation philosophy.
    - a. The Internet has fundamentally changed the economics of market research. No longer is it a laborious and costly activity, studies can be designed in days and carried out overnight.
    - b. Experiments, such as A/B (inclusion/exclusion of an item) tests, can be done without consumers knowing that an experiment is being conducted.
    - c. Also, large Internet panels permit the researchers to look at customer buying behavior over time and look at very precise target segments.
    - d. The market research core courses coupled with the Internet marketing courses directly address the dramatic move toward experimentation in the new marketing arena.
  7. Challenge (and change) your mental model.
    - a. Marketers of the 21st century must challenge conventional wisdom by using creativity and innovation. They need to rethink their mental models of how to empower customers, understand their behaviors, collect and analyze the data, and design strategies that affect customer behavior consistent with company objectives (Wind, 2008).
    - b. Who better to challenge these mental models of existing marketing professionals than students who have grown up using these new technologies to do new and creative applications?
    - c. The courses in the major give students the vocabulary and basic knowledge of existing marketing professionals as well as digital marketing knowledge.

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