



Summer 2007 AMA Educators' Conference High Impact Sessions

Special Session 7.5 Why Would Anyone Want to Write a Textbook?

Session Chairs:

Dhruv Grewal, Babson College

Michael Levy, Babson College

Why Write a Textbook: Pros and Cons

Dhruv Grewal, Babson College

Branding and Positioning Issues in College Textbook Authorship

Greg Marshall, Rollins College

College Publishing in 2007

Doug Hughes, Executive Editor, Marketing and Management, McGraw Hill/Irwin

Session Summary Writer: *Edward Ramirez, Florida State University*

Marketing academics face a myriad of choices on how to make their contribution(s) to the discipline. Oftentimes these choices are mutually exclusive, given time and resource constraints, resulting in internal conflicts. Textbook writing has emerged as one of the available options. Shrouded in mystery to most, this activity can provide authors with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. In this informative session, two accomplished scholars and an industry representative outlined the pros and cons of embarking on such an undertaking.

Dr. Grewal of Babson College suggested that while most academics elect to develop texts for the “3 Fs” (fame, fortune, and fun), the work itself represents an arduous task with a fairly low return on investment, usually falling short of these lofty goals. Simply put, he argued that contracts, publisher imposed deadlines, the taxing process of writing and then re-writing, and the prospect of fairly low remuneration represent significant hurdles to would-be authors. On the other hand, however, he stated that the opportunity to network with other faculty members, the chance to gain insight into the ever evolving needs of the student, and the sense of accomplishment, for him, outweighed the negative aspects. Finally, Dr. Grewal made several recommendations to potential textbook authors. Specifically, he urged them to recognize that the author is writing for two constituencies—the student and the instructor—who view texts from two disparate perspectives. To this point, he argued that compelling texts *integrate* ideas, seek to *involve* the student, and allow for *interactivity* in the learning process. More concretely,

he suggested that authors develop texts with monthly newsletters, links to videos, summaries to articles—both practitioner and academically oriented—and, perhaps most importantly, develop tools that the student can use to gain a better grasp of the concepts presented.

Dr. Marshall of Rollins College discussed the environmental forces impinging on textbook authorship that can make this type of work challenging. Specifically, he suggested that *generation-Y* students embodied different levels of preparation, interest, and attention spans. Echoing the wisdom in Dr. Grewal's discussion, he stated that it is pivotal that the author capture and maintain the student's interest, citing the use of multimedia and web-based solutions to do so. He did, however, argue that despite the call for interactivity to engage the student, pedagogy should not be diluted. Furthermore, he cautioned would-be authors of the risk of cultivating an educational environment that was *too* entertaining, suggesting that it could have a negative impact on students' discipline as they entered a much less entertaining work environment. Finally, he touched on the future of business education, facilitating a dialogue with the audience. Key issues, here, centered on how to get students to actually read the text, whether or not the business community was being served by the instructional efforts of academics, and how to stimulate potential authors to consider writing a textbook.

Doug Hughes of McGraw Hill/Irwin spoke on the challenges facing both publishing firms and authors alike. He suggested that profitability of textbook publishing had been strained by student text sharing, the highly efficient used-textbook marketplace, and the inappropriate use of international texts. These forces, naturally, affect both the publisher and the author, as they result in diminished sales and, consequently, royalties—reducing the extrinsic stimulus.