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# Using Technology to Engage and Improve Millennial Students' Presentation Performance

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**Abstract** - This paper discusses a popular teaching technique applied in Sales Courses that marketing educators can utilize to engage today's millennial students through the use of streaming video technology. The exercise, a role-play simulation, can help today's marketing students gain valuable skills needed to improve their communication ability by completing a two-stage role-play. Utilizing quasi-experimental design, scores in five areas rated by the professor and in-class students were calculated in role-play one and compared to role-play two for 91 students in five professional sales courses. A repeated measure ANOVA evaluated the impact of providing feedback and self-analysis on students' role-play scores. While exploratory, the results offer support that students' scores improved in all five areas between role-plays one and two. Marketing and sales faculty are provided guidance for implementing role-play simulations that are experiential and employ technology to improve today's "Gen M" students' communication abilities.

**Keywords** - simulation, communication skills, millennial, social media

**Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners** - In this paper, marketing faculty are offered guidance on implementing role-play simulations that improve students' communication abilities by using technology that provide an experiential learning environment in marketing classes preferred by Gen M. We discuss how the recordings can be employed to further a student's professional development.

## Introduction

One of the most significant and consistent characteristics describing today's Millennial Generation is their high-level of understanding and comfort with technology. Born between 1982 and 2003 and representing roughly 30 percent of the United States population (Tucker 2006), the Millennial Generation is described as being "racially and ethnically diverse, confident with a sense of empowerment, extremely independent, sociable, civic minded and technologically savvy" (Nicolletti and Merriman, 2007, p. 28). Due to the Millennials' dependency on and exposure to technology, educators face a unique challenge connecting with them in the classroom. The Millennials, also referred to as Gen M, Net Gen, or Digital Natives, are the first generation to mature in a digital age where they are constantly connected to family and friends through cell phones, text messages, email, and social media outlets such as FaceBook and Twitter. Gen Ms not only leverage technology to communicate but they also search for information, buy and sell products, and download music. One might ask: what would today's world be like for Millennials without Google, Amazon.com, Ebay, or iTunes?

The challenge for college educators in teaching Gen M is keeping them actively engaged and interested in subject matter (McGlynn 2005). Lecturing has always been a more traditional method of teaching, but Millennials have criticized this instructional method (Ueltschy 2001). Since Millennials are exposed to collaborative technologies like Web 2.0, today's student communicates differently than Gen X and Baby Boomer generations. That is, Gen M students prefer a learning environment that utilizes technology that provides a high level of interactivity (Selwyn 2007) and enables them to measure progress and achieve goals (Jones-Dwyer and Pospisil 2005; Sweeney 2006). "Today's children are growing up in a world that is increasingly interactive, communications intensive, and knowledge based" (Ueltschy 2001, pg. 63). A key question is how can today's marketing educator utilize technology to provide a creative learning environment that will meet the educational needs of the Millennial Generation?

The purpose of this paper is to introduce and describe a teaching technique that enables today's Gen M marketing students to evaluate and improve their verbal and non-verbal communication skills via the use of an experiential role-play simulation. The paper also discusses the benefits of simulation in both sales and marketing courses and its importance in preparing students for today's competitive marketplace.

## Literature Review

Regardless of generation, being able to communicate and present effectively are important skills all students must possess if they are to succeed in the business world. Faculty members need to provide marketing students the necessary skills to succeed by "focus[ing] on teaching methods that emphasize and include the most effective elements of student learning" (Black and Wingfield 2008, p.1). Experiential learning exercises presented in marketing courses can play a large role in developing

these abilities. Past research supports the introduction of new teaching methods and integrating curriculum into a course for the purpose of creating a “deeper and richer learning experience” (Craciun and Corrigan 2010, p.116). In order to impact the Millennial Generation, these exercises must be visually stimulating and interactive (Nicolletti and Merriman 2007). Past studies recommend using interactive technology to increase student participation and learning (Ueltschy 2001). Recent research on technology usage and student performance concluded that students perceived that interactive technology, in the form of online assessments, were the most effective (Aviles and Eastman 2012).

Application of simulation exercises within the classroom has also proven to be an effective teaching method. “When taught using a simulation, students are more successful in acquiring and retaining these skills and applying them to “real-world” situations. Using approaches that link marketing concepts and skills to “real-world” and “life-long” learning skills help students retain marketing skills and achieve marketing learning outcomes” (Jackson 2012, p. 18). Marketing professors often provide students with an opportunity to enhance their communication skills through in-class presentations. However, for these assignments to be effective it is essential for students to be given an opportunity to view and critique themselves. Otherwise, students may not know specifically how they need to improve or they may have trouble understanding what skills require further refinement. In many marketing classes student presentations are critiqued once by the instructor, but there is little opportunity for students to reflect on their performance and make changes that will result in an improved second presentation. In today’s “Digital Age,” educators can leverage technology to stimulate learning and provide an opportunity for self-analysis.

This study provides marketing faculty members with a teaching technique that allows students to improve their presentation skills by utilizing digital resources and participating in an experiential learning exercise--a two-part role-play simulation. “A simulation that allows students to be more actively engaged and in greater control of their own learning should enhance student learning since research indicates this type of environment is beneficial for Millennials” (Bracy, Bevill, and Roach 2010, p. 23). Role-play simulation is currently utilized within most professional sales courses and provides a structure in which students can:

- Apply listening, adaptive selling, and information gathering techniques.
- Receive constructive feedback from professor and peers through online interaction.
- Provide self-assessment of presentations by analyzing video recordings.
- Develop and improve areas of communication.
- Apply feedback in second role-play scenario, known as the presentation proposal.
- Combine videos and social media to develop professional portfolio for

networking and career enhancement.

The curriculum objectives of a two-part role-play include:

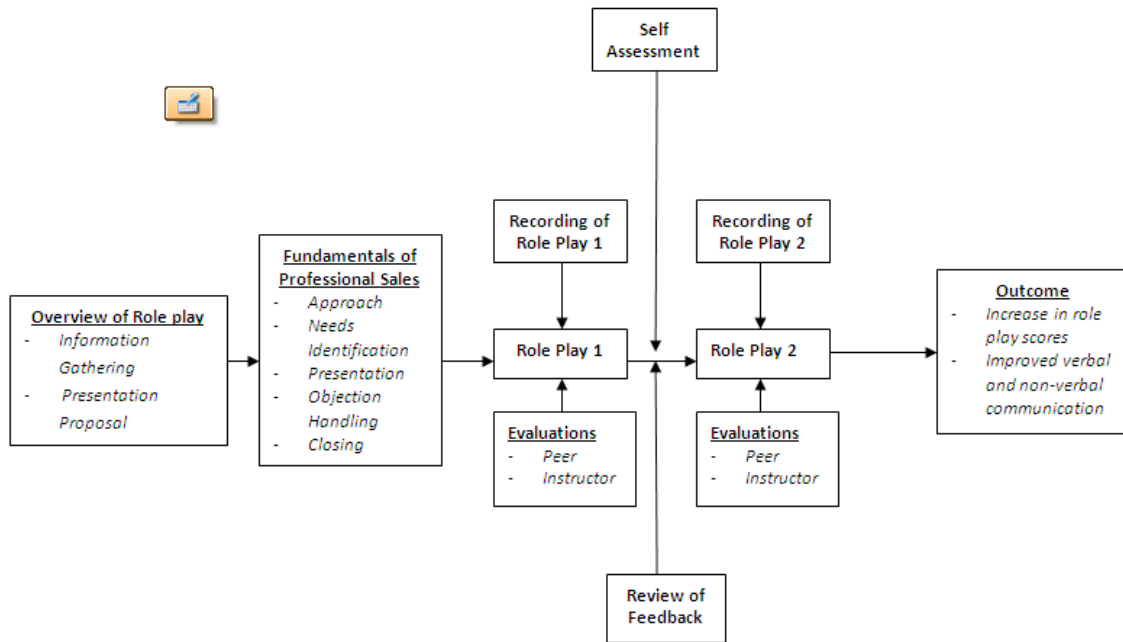
- Clearly articulating goals and objectives of a client meeting.
- Following a process to achieve goal of the meeting.
- Demonstrating selling skills.
- Presenting value propositions and key differentiators of products/solutions.
- Refining oral presentation skills to effectively communicate with customers.
- Demonstrating an ability to logically translate product as a value added solution.
- Demonstrating an ability to respond appropriately to buyer objections.
- Initiating customer feedback and seek commitment.

Though many course requirements in marketing and professional sales curricula mirror these objectives, it is not easy to confirm whether students have improved in developing the needed skills to meet course goals. The use of role-plays and videotaping has previously been recommended in sales and marketing classes (Anderson et al. 2005; Parker, Pettijohn, and Luke 1996). Recording and observing role-plays enable students to assess their performance through feedback from the professor, peers, and themselves. Then, completing a second role-play allows the student to address weak areas of performance and improve upon the initial presentation. This active course design enables a learner to be “more engaged in the learning process, learn more effectively and the learning experience is more intense” (Black and Wingfield 2008, p.1).

## **Overview of Role-play Simulation Model**

The model offered in Figure 1 provides an overview of the role-play simulation exercise.

Figure 1  
Two Part Role-play Simulation Model



Two, 15-minute role-plays were conducted in five semester-long classes over a three academic year time-period. Detailed objectives for each role-play scenario were provided to students prior to each role-play:

*Role-play #1 - Information Gathering* - This involved gathering information from a new prospective buyer. The student formulated questions that allowed them to learn about the buyer's needs and their challenges. Based upon identified buyer challenges, the student then creates a value-based solution that addresses the stated needs and the solution is presented in the second role-play.

*Role-play #2 Proposal Presentation* - Based on information obtained in the initial meeting, students meet a second time with the buyer to present their solution proposal and recommendations. An important aspect of the role-play is to ensure the presentation matches the buyer's needs identified in the initial role-play.

A secondary benefit of this role-play scenario is gaining an understanding of the fundamentals of the course; in this example, professional sales: the evolution of selling, communication styles, adaptive selling, needs analysis, creation of value proposition, and the buying process. Each concept had been covered in a semester-long sales class via lecture, case study, and guest speaker presentations. Once students have a firm grasp of these concepts, they are provided with role-play details about the company and the product they represent. Each student is responsible for studying and understanding the company, the product, and the specific industry

prior to participating in the first role-play exercise. To be successful, students should approach the role-play as if they were a full-time employee of the selling firm.

An overview of the buyer profile is also provided to the student prior to the role-play. The profile briefly describes the individual they would meet, their role or position in the buying firm, and general details about their potential needs. Each student/sales professional created a strategic plan to uncover the buyer needs, challenges, and process in order to deliver a value-based solution that fit the customer's needs. Utilizing effective industrial selling methods, students applied a sales process similar to Spin-Selling, Sandler, or Miller Heiman methodologies. The foundation of the sales process discussed during the course included:

- Approach (rapport building, developing agenda and objective, transitioning to business)
- Information Gathering (asking probing questions to identify buyer's needs and process)
- Presentation Proposal (present benefits based on needs, use of marketing materials)
- Objection Handling (ability to address and clarify concerns of prospect)
- Closing (bring sales process forward and gain commitment)

The teaching innovation in this buyer-engagement marketing course is delivered between role-plays one and two. For role-play one, students assuming the role of a sales professional are recorded during their meeting with the buyer. Video capture of role-plays is a crucial part of the university sales curricula (Widmier, Loe, and Selden 2007) and is believed to be effective in most sales/marketing courses (Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy 2011). The education of marketing students is shifting from traditional methods to experiential learning supported by educational technology tools (Young, Klemz, and Murphy 2003). Role-plays can be recorded utilizing a variety of audio/video technologies depending upon the resources available to the instructor and the university. The videos can then be posted to an internal institutional URL or a learning collaboration tool such as BlackBoard. Educators can also post videos to a public domain or YouTube. Since the Millennial generation expects information to be at their fingertips, video posting enables them to immediately access their presentations. Gen M is also more visually literate in comparison to past generations (Nicolletti and Merriman 2007); therefore, viewing online presentations offers a more engaged learning experience. Students are instructed to review their own video and provide a self-assessment based upon the learning criteria covered in class.

In our example, students can leverage technology to provide self-assessment and this exercise provides students with an opportunity to review the feedback provided by their peers and the instructor to improve upon and enhance their second presentation. By reviewing their video, students can correct specific areas of communication such as eye contact, use of hands, voice clarity, or the overuse of filler words (i.e. "like," "um,"

“basically”). The recording can also be reviewed in class where their professor and peers can offer constructive comments about their performance. A key element of the role-play simulation is the feedback provided by the educator. Intervention of coaching by individuals who are experts in subject matter can significantly improve student performance (Dickinson and Dickinson 2012).

The standards used in the evaluation of the role-plays are similar to the criteria utilized in U.S. sales competitions at the RBI Sales Challenge ([rbisaleschallenge.wpunj.edu](http://rbisaleschallenge.wpunj.edu)) and the National Collegiate Sales Competition ([coles.kennesaw.edu/ncsc](http://coles.kennesaw.edu/ncsc)). Both student competitions have been in existence for a number of years (RBI 10 years and NCSC 15 years) and are events that measure sales students’ abilities in conducting a sales call. Thousands of students over the years have participated in these events to sharpen their sales skills and gain the attention of sales recruiters. Students are judged on how well they build rapport, identify needs, present a solution, handle objections, and lastly move the sale forward or close the sale. This exercise utilizes the same evaluative criteria employed at the sales competitions: approach, needs identification, communication and presentation, close, and overall meeting (see Appendix).

Once the instructor records the scores from the class, and from his or her own evaluations, then individual feedback is provided to each student. Instructors also provide qualitative feedback to each student. Feedback includes constructive criticism for the areas of: delivery, communication, eye contact, non-verbal messages, and use of filler words. This feedback is then emailed or posted on the technology utilized. The qualitative feedback is important in identifying and communicating the most important areas to focus on for improvement. Feedback is a crucial element of this learning experience, especially for Millennials (Shaw and Fairhurst 2008). In many cases constructive criticism is not evident to a student regardless of generation. By utilizing the role-play technology, recordings can reinforce the feedback, and students can better identify which areas need improvement.

Once reviewed, the student is responsible for utilizing the feedback to improve and develop their communication skills in a second role-play that is the presentation proposal meeting. In this follow-up meeting, the student is graded on how well the presentation meets client or buyer needs that were identified in the initial meeting. In other words did the student, who acted as a sales or marketing professional, listen to the buyer/client and pay close attention to their stated needs? In the second role-play, the professor and peers again evaluate the student’s performance based upon the nearly identical criteria used in the first role-play except that the student closes the sale/solves the problem in the second role-play versus asking for a second meeting.

Past pedagogical studies recommend that in order to assess performance, learning outcomes must be clearly defined (Young, Klemz, and Murphy 2003). Learning outcomes and student performance is a “multidimensional construct involving the behaviors or actions that are relevant to the goals of the course” (Young, Klemz, and Murphy 2003, p.131). The outcome or learning performance variables in this simulation are increased role-play scores and improved communication. The following section provides details of assessment results of the learning outcomes.

## **Methodology**



Past research supports the effectiveness of role-plays within sales-related marketing courses compared to other teaching techniques (Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy 2011). Utilizing a quasi-experimental design approach (Cook & Campbell, 1979), data were collected over a three year period in five Professional Selling classes that assessed scores of role-play one and role-play two. To determine the assessment from a quantitative perspective, scores from both peers and instructor were calculated in five areas for role-play one and compared to role-play two. The study did not implement a control group within the simulation. Researchers have utilized quasi-experimental design that lacked a control group due to “practical necessities imposed by funding, ethics...” (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002, p.104). The principal reason for not employing a control group was that all students needed to participate in the role-plays to complete the course. In the second role-play students are expected to demonstrate improved verbal and non-verbal communication such as increased eye contact, active listening, and body language. A repeated measure ANOVA was conducted in five sales courses (n=91) to evaluate the impact of providing feedback and self-analysis on students’ role-play scores across genders. All role-play participants were full-time undergraduate students who majored in marketing. The students represented the Millennial Generation (between the ages of 19-21) and had completed Principles of Marketing as a prerequisite to Professional Selling. Approximately fifty-four percent were males and forty-six percent were females. We analyzed five dependent variables for students: 1) approach, rapport building, professionalism, 2) needs identification, asking questions, 3) communication/presentation skills, 4) closing of sale/moving the sale forward, 5) overall meeting/enthusiasm, attitude.

## Results

Role-play scores were provided by both instructor and peer evaluation. The results in Table 1 indicate that student scores improved between role-plays one and two and across genders. In order to determine whether the mean differences were statistically significant within role-plays one and two and across male and female students, a profile analysis repeated measure ANOVA was conducted.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics Role-play Scores for Professional Sales Class (n = 91)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Pre test</i>		<i>Post test</i>		<b>N</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	
<b><i>Approach</i></b>					
<b>Male</b>	8.44	1.16	9.00	1.06	49
<b>Female</b>	9.11	0.91	9.23	1.43	42
<b>Total</b>	8.75	1.10	9.10	1.24	91
<b><i>Needs Identification</i></b>					
<b>Male</b>	8.89	1.01	9.20	0.98	49
<b>Female</b>	9.14	1.60	9.56	0.75	42

<b>Total</b>	9.01	1.31	9.37	0.89	91
<b>Communication &amp; Presentation</b>					
<b>Male</b>	8.22	1.14	9.37	0.84	49
<b>Female</b>	8.57	0.88	9.70	0.56	42
<b>Total</b>	8.38	1.04	9.52	0.74	91
<b>Closing</b>					
<b>Male</b>	8.98	1.08	9.27	0.88	49
<b>Female</b>	9.40	0.86	9.55	0.71	42
<b>Total</b>	9.18	1.00	9.40	0.81	91
<b>Overall Meeting</b>					
<b>Male</b>	8.55	1.14	9.10	0.91	49
<b>Female</b>	8.99	0.91	9.49	0.81	42
<b>Total</b>	8.75	1.06	9.28	0.88	91

As shown in Table 2 the mean for approach, rapport building, professionalism [F(1, 89) = 6.20, P < 0.05], needs identification [F(1, 89) = 6.68, P < 0.05], communication/presentation skills [F(1, 89) = 127.64, P < 0.01], closing of sale/moving the sale forward [F(1, 89) = 4.53, P < 0.05], and overall meeting/enthusiasm [F(1, 89) = 27.41, P < 0.01] differed statistically significantly between pre and posttest points. The test revealed that simulation training resulted in improved approach, rapport building, and professionalism scores from pre-simulation to post-simulation ( $8.75 \pm 1.10$  vs.  $9.10 \pm 1.24$ , respectively). Similarly, the test revealed improvements in needs identification ( $9.01 \pm 1.31$  vs.  $9.37 \pm 0.89$ , respectively), communication/presentation skills ( $8.38 \pm 1.04$  vs.  $9.52 \pm 0.74$ , respectively), closing of sale/moving the sale forward ( $9.18 \pm 1.00$  vs.  $9.40 \pm 0.81$ , respectively), and overall meeting/enthusiasm attitude ( $8.75 \pm 1.06$  vs.  $9.28 \pm 0.88$ , respectively). The most significant difference was in communication and presentation skills and in the overall meeting enthusiasm attitude. We can, therefore, conclude that the simulation training program elicits a statistically significant improvement in a variety of measurable sales performance key indicators for all students.

Table 2  
Profile Analysis ANOVA

<i>Repeated Measure ANOVA (Tests of Within-Subjects Effects)</i>						
Sphericity Assumed						
Source	Measure	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Simulation</b>	Approach	5.23	1	5.23	6.20*	0.01
	Needs Identification	6.08	1	6.08	6.68*	0.01
	Communication and Presentation	58.46	1	58.46	127.64**	0.00
	Closing	2.08	1	2.08	4.53*	0.04
	Overall Meeting	12.49	1	12.49	27.41**	0.00

<b>Error</b>	Approach	75.11	89	0.84
	Needs Identification	80.90	89	0.91
	Communication and Presentation	40.76	89	0.46
	Closing	40.82	89	0.46
	Overall Meeting	40.56	89	0.46

\* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.01$

The test between-subjects effects in Table 3 indicated that female students outperformed their male counterparts on four of the measures: approach, rapport building, professionalism [F(1, 89) = 5.00,  $P < 0.05$ ], communication/presentation skills [F(1, 89) = 4.66,  $P < 0.05$ ], closing of sale/moving the sale forward [F(1, 89) = 4.86,  $P < 0.05$ ], and overall meeting/enthusiasm [F(1, 89) = 5.54,  $P < 0.05$ ]. Female and male students scores were similar in needs identification [F(1, 90) = 2.64,  $P > 0.1$ ]. In Table 4 a pair-wise comparison of simulation scores across genders indicates higher mean scores for female students in approach, rapport building, professionalism as compared to male students (Mean Difference=0.45,  $P < 0.05$ , Std. Error=0.20). Similarly, the test revealed improvements for female students as compared to male students in communication/presentation skills (Mean Difference=0.34,  $P < 0.05$ , Std. Error=0.16), closing of sale/moving the sale forward (Mean Difference=0.35,  $P < 0.05$ , Std. Error=0.16), and overall meeting/enthusiasm attitude (Mean difference=0.41,  $P < 0.05$ , Std. Error=0.17). We can, therefore, conclude that female students performed better than male students in four areas of the simulation: approach, rapport building, professionalism, communication/presentation skills, closing of sale/moving the sale forward, and overall meeting/enthusiasm. The findings are consistent with current literature that shows female students outperform their male counterparts in an educational environment (Diprete and Buchmann 2013).

Table 3  
Test of Between Subjects Effects

Source	Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Intercept</b>	Approach	14469.82	1	14469.82	7995.13**	0.00
	Needs Identification	15308.52	1	15308.52	9599.29**	0.00
	Communication and Presentation	14545.59	1	14545.59	12885.15**	0.00
	Closing	15645.75	1	15645.75	13423.61**	0.00
	Overall Meeting	14760.19	1	14760.19	10676.74**	0.00
<b>Gender</b>	Approach	9.05	1	9.05	5.00*	0.03
	Needs Identification	4.22	1	4.22	2.64	0.11
	Communication and Presentation	5.26	1	5.26	4.66*	0.03
	Closing	5.66	1	5.66	4.86*	0.03
	Overall Meeting	7.66	1	7.66	5.54*	0.02

<b>Error</b>	Approach	161.07	89	1.81
	Needs Identification	141.93	89	1.59
	Communication and Presentation	100.47	89	1.13
	Closing	103.73	89	1.17
	Overall Meeting	123.04	89	1.38

\*P<0.05, \*\*P< 0.01

Table 4  
Test of Between Subjects Pairwise Comparison of Male and Female Students

Gender Pairwise Comparisons					
Measure	(I) Gender	(J) Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(a)
<b>Approach</b>	Female	Male	0.45*	0.20	0.03
<b>Needs Identification</b>	Female	Male	0.31	0.19	0.11
<b>Communication and Presentation</b>	Female	Male	0.34*	0.16	0.03
<b>Closing</b>	Female	Male	0.35*	0.16	0.03
<b>Overall Meeting</b>	Female	Male	0.41*	0.17	0.02

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

<sup>a</sup> Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

This paper provides marketing educators with pedagogy that today’s Millennial student can embrace to improve their communication skills. The simulation exercise can be employed in sales-related courses and in most marketing classes to include: principles, advertising, B2B, consumer behavior, sales management, and/or marketing research. That is, marketing educators can adapt the simulation to any marketing class by requiring students to provide two related presentations during a semester-long class. Business education studies suggest that students prefer active, technological designs over passive instructional approaches (Nulty and Bennett 1996) and lead to higher student performance (Young et. al. 2003). The first presentation should be a recorded marketing proposal or presentation of preliminary findings. The second presentation shifts to a meeting that addresses the findings from the research or the action plan that recommends advertising, marketing strategy, or marketing research projects. When students analyze feedback, critique their first presentation, and implement the feedback, this leads to increased learning and a higher quality second marketing presentation. With sufficient effort, students can exhibit improved verbal (voice clarity, confidence, minimal filler words) and non-verbal (increased eye contact, posture, proper use of hands) communication. The study also found that students used fewer filler words (i.e. “um”, “ok”, “cool”, etc.) in the second role-play. These are skills all marketing students need to develop, regardless of generation, in order to succeed in a customer-engaged environment or in internal/external work interactions. This course design is considered experiential learning that is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1983, p. 38).

## Discussion and Implications

There are four implications that marketing educators should consider. First, marketing educators can apply the simulation in any class by requiring students to engage in two related presentations during a semester-long class. Marketing educators have a responsibility to provide an engaged-learning environment that fulfills the needs of the tech savvy Gen M student to improve communication and presentation skills. “Students should be participants, not merely observers, in the class room setting” (Ueltschy 2001). As shown in this paper, when students analyze feedback, critique their first presentation, and implement the feedback to plan the follow-up presentation, this leads to improved presentation skills.

Second, marketing education is changing at a rapid pace with increased utilization of technology. There are two concerns associated with integrating role-play simulation exercises into the classroom. The first is time. Coordinating role-plays, recording, downloading, and then viewing the videos is time consuming for both the instructor and the students who offer feedback. One way to overcome this challenge is to utilize technology that allows the instructor to stream the videos in real time as the role-plays are recorded. The instructor and the students can critique and score the role-plays as they are being played versus using later classes to view the videos. This leads to the second challenge of this exercise, which is access to technology resources. Not every school or university has access to technology capabilities that permit classroom streaming of videos. Assistance, in the form of human capital, may be needed to assist with technology issues. Utilization of inexpensive pocket size camcorders, like Flip Cameras or similar technology, is a cost effective way to minimize the technology concern and allow the instructor to self-manage role-play simulation without a significant investment in technology or resources.

Third, with the increasing use of social media outlets such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube students are networking and marketing themselves differently to employers. According to Childs, Gingrich, and Piller (2010) nearly 96 percent of Millennials utilize or belong to a social network where they post pictures and videos and form groups. Students can also post their role-play videos on Facebook or another social network as an extension of their portfolio to network and demonstrate communication and presentation skills to future employers.

Another application of role-play simulation is to create separate “blogs” or “vlogs” (video blogs) after recording each video. Blog is a web-based journal created by an individual or group to share content with others (Wankel 2009). Both instructor and Gen M peers can post constructive feedback on a student’s vlog in real time. Students can also employ vlogs to promote themselves to company recruiters. YouTube can likewise be used to capture videos for future learning experiences. Lastly, marketing educators can save recordings and post them on YouTube to use for in-class or online lectures.

A technology phenomenon that is gaining popularity in higher education is the use of virtual worlds known as Second Life. Second Life is a three-dimensional world in which learners and students can interact with one another using audio and video objects known as avatars to create a simulated environment. In Second

Life, instructors and students can share content such as Power Points, videos, and feedback (Wankel 2009). Second Life can be an ideal virtual environment platform for marketing role-play scenarios. Deploying engaged activities, like role-playing scenarios in a virtual platform, fosters experiential learning in all students (Wankel 2009).

Finally, marketing educators understand that communication and presentation skills are crucial to business success. And, marketing educators must leverage the latest technology to innovatively interact with students, evolve the learning process, and help students enhance their overall business skills.

## **Conclusions**

Today's Millennial Generation enters collegiate marketing classes with extensive technology experience. As Gen M's technological capabilities increase, marketing academics need to integrate technology into the classroom to insure an engaged-learning environment exists. Though preliminary, this study outlines an experiential learning exercise in the form of a role-play simulation that is combined with technology to create an engaged-learning experience. This active learning method provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their first presentation and, using feedback, improve on the second. Our findings suggest that technology can provide improved learning outcomes in all university marketing classes.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Like all research, this study has limitations. First, future studies should consider collecting student self-assessments and comparing these with peer and instructor evaluations. Future studies should also consider using evaluators other than students. Bias, both positive and negative, can develop for students that are peers or friends outside of class. Second, researchers should conduct a similar assessment in other marketing classes of students utilizing this learning format. Third, qualitative comments should be gathered from students to gauge their thoughts regarding the double-presentation, technology approach advocated in this paper.

Lastly, we utilized a quasi-experimental structure that lacked a control group since randomization was impractical and unethical (Gribbons and Herman 1997). In effect, a control group would not be able to complete course requirements under the same conditions. Employing quasi-experimental designs minimizes threats to external validity since natural environments do not suffer the same problems of artificiality as control group experiments (Robson, Shannon, Goldenhar, and Hale 2001) and should be considered in any future studies.

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## **Appendix - Role-play Criteria**

### **APPROACH**

- Professional introduction & rapport building
- Salesperson gains prospect's attention
- Demonstrated enthusiasm and confidence
- Smooth transition into needs identification

Exceptional 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Weak

### **NEEDS IDENTIFICATION**

- Obtain a clear understanding of customer's needs in order to present a solution
- Uncovered decision process (decision criteria, people involved in decision process)
- Asked effective question to uncover challenges or problems of buyers.
- Effectively clarified needs of the buyer (discovered current problems, goals, etc.)

Exceptional 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Weak

### **COMMUNICATION & PRESENTATION**

- Effective verbal communication (articulate, clear, professional, non-use of filler words)
- Use of non-verbal skills (eye contact, body language, appropriate use of hands)
- Product knowledge
- Presentation meets needs of buyer
- Effectively involved the buyer in the conversation
- Utilization of marketing material and visual aids

Exceptional 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Weak

### **CLOSE**

- Takes initiative to move the sales process to the next step
- Persuasive in presenting a reason to continue to a "solutions meeting"
- Ability to gain commitment from buyer.

Exceptional 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Weak

### **OVERALL MEETING**

- Salesperson enthusiasm and confidence
- Professionalism (respect of time, professional dress)

Exceptional 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Weak