Incentivizing Better Writing: The Fatal Flaw Policy

Kirsten A. Passyn, kpassyn@citadel.edu
Michael Weeks, mweeks@citadel.edu

ABSTRACT

The importance of written communication skills for business undergraduates is well documented (Brink, Palmer, and Costigan, 2015, Brown 2015, National Association of Colleges and Employers 2015). In fact, communication skills are the most popular learning goal adopted by AACSB accredited programs (AACSB white paper, 2013). Despite the demand by employers for proficient writers and the acknowledgment of the importance of professional writing by business schools, a large and growing portion of undergraduates can’t write (Sigmar and Hynes 2011).

Despite the importance of written communications skills, their remains limited evidence of effective methods to improve student writing. The majority of proposed methods demand increased amounts of writing and assessment of written communications skills using a rubric with limited impact. (e.g., Bacon and Anderson 2004 ). This research proposes a unique and effective method for improving undergraduate business students writing skills, the Fatal Flaw Policy. The Fatal Flaw Policy is shown next. Then, insights into the use of the policy are discussed.
The Fatal Flaw policy was applied to a written group report, that was submitted in three sections. On the initial submission, 9 of 15 papers were returned under the Fatal Flaw Policy. Of these only one was returned a second time. On the second submission, four projects were returned under the policy, and none were returned a second time. On the third submission, only 1 document was returned under the policy. The significant improvements, over three submissions, suggest that the Fatal Flaw Policy can be used to improve student writing.

Although, the Fatal Flaw Policy shows promise as a method for improving student writing it has several limitations. These include testing using a group assignment, differences in the requirements for sections, and a single reviewer policy. More importantly, the policy was applied only to gross grammatical errors and not to other writing and style issues, limiting its impact. Future use of the Fatal Flaw Policy can be used to assess how impactful it is to improve individual writing and extend the policy to assess writing style as well as grammar.

References:


*Keywords:* Written Communication, Writing Assessment, Business Education

*Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners:* The importance of written communication skills for business undergraduates is well documented. It is the most popular learning goal of AACSB accredited programs. However, undergraduates can’t write. The Fatal Flaw Policy is an effective method for improving writing skills.

*Author Information:*
Kirsten Passyn, The Citadel
Michael Weeks, The Citadel

*Track:* Marketing Education

*ID#: 1411*