Analyzing The Impact Of The 2012 Ford Focus Target Hunt: Can Student Managed Projects Accomplish Both Academic And Corporate Objectives?
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ABSTRACT

Student-managed business projects offer students the opportunity to garner valuable real world experience while businesses can fulfill corporate responsibilities utilizing relatively inexpensive manpower. This paper describes an event marketing/social media marketing project completed in conjunction with Jackson-Dawson Communications, representing the Ford Motor Company, and a Midwestern University chapter of the American Marketing Association. Through the successful implementation of the AIDA-IMC promotion model, a committed AMA Chapter, and a number of very cooperative business partnerships, a host of corporate and academic objectives were accomplished while participants gained valuable insight into event marketing principles.

Keywords: Experiential Learning; Student Managed Projects; AIDA-IMC; Social Media Marketing; Academic-Corporate Partnerships; Student Managed Project Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Providing students, student organizations, and partnering firms with experiential learning opportunities that meet both academic and corporate objectives is a challenging task. But doing so in a mass lecture environment with 500 students is a daunting educational undertaking. This paper describes an event/social media marketing initiative that proved successful on a number of levels, setting the stage for future corporate/student organization/class room cooperative projects.

The current generation of business students is growing up in a social environment that is progressively interactive and communication intensive – students expect more stimulating education experiences to maintain their interest, concentration level, and motivation (Ueltschy, 2001). In addressing these needs, experiential learning theory offers a fundamentally different view of learning from that of more traditional educational methods (Kolb, 1984).

As the title implies, the term “experiential” differentiates experiential learning from theories that emphasize cognition over affect, and even behavioral learning theories that deemphasize the role of the subjective experience in the learning process (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000). The concept has also received a significant amount of attention in the marketing education literature (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, & Mayo, 2000; Dommeyer, 1986; Graeff, 1997; Titus & Petroshiul, 1993; Williams, Beard, & Rymer, 1991).

Within experiential learning theory, learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Experiential learning can therefore transform the behavior of both faculty and students (Li, Greenberg, & Nicholls, 2007). “The professor’s role evolves from that of a knowledge fact provider to
a knowledge theorist and manager” and the student changes from a passive knowledge acquirer to an active learner (Celsi & Wolfinbarger, 2002, p. 69). Unfortunately, “In relatively few instances in established business schools is there much clinical training or learning by doing – experiential learning where concrete experience is the basis for observation and reflection” (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p. 85).

Offering experiential learning opportunities is labor intensive and, in many cases, quite uncertain, particularly when the success of the learning initiative is based partially upon corporate objectives surrounding the experiential learning project. For a successful adoption, greater effort is required in curriculum development because the pedagogy is not hereditary, but a drastic departure from the traditional lecture-based approach (Daly, 2001).

Because experiential learning focuses on learning through reflection on one’s personal experiences (Goby & Lewis, 2000), a decision was made to engage in a event/social media marketing project with a communications firm, a University chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA), and a mass lecture marketing principles class. The purpose of this article is to describe the project and to illustrate the degree of success the project achieved with regard to both corporate and educational objectives.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In the summer of 2011, the Faculty Advisor for Northern Illinois University’s AMA chapter was approached by Jackson-Dawson Communications and asked if his AMA chapter would serve as a host site for a 2012 Ford Focus Target Hunt event (www.Focusargethunt.com). The AMA chapter would be responsible for promoting and hosting the event while Jackson-Dawson would provide a turn-key test drive experience.

The purpose of the event was to allow participants the opportunity to drive a 2012 Ford Focus through a challenging pylon course. While doing so, the participant would earn points for driving over sensors that were strategically placed on the course. Cameras were installed in the test cars and a digital dashboard with information such as speed, elapsed time, throttle, brake, points earned, etc., were displayed.

Following the event, participants were emailed a link to their recorded test drive with the hope that the participant would then spread news of the event and the 2012 Ford Focus via social media with postings and viral emails.

The AMA Chapter Advisor is also responsible for teaching a mass lecture Marketing Principles class. Seizing an opportunity to involve his Marketing Principles students, the class was asked to preregister online for the event and take part in the test drive. Background on Ford and its use of social media marketing, as well as the Attention-Interest-Desire-Action-Integrated Marketing Communication (AIDA-IMC), were discussed in detail.

The AMA chapter identified four target markets for the event:

1. **Primary Target Market – Marketing Principles Students** – Nearly 500 students were enrolled in the class. The majority of students were of traditional age with varying demographic, psychographic, and lifestyle characteristics.
2. **Secondary Segment – University Upper Level Business Students** – Nearly all upper level business classes are held in the same College of Business building.
3. **Tertiary Segment – University Students, Any Major** – Northern Illinois University is the home of over 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students. This student population is extremely diverse with a large percentage of students living off campus. However, access to the general student population is difficult due to University policy.
4. **Outlier Segment – Local Area Residents** – Convincing local residents to come to Northern Illinois University to take part in the event would be challenging. Marginal resources were allocated in attempting to reach this market segment.
Students in the Marketing Principles class were made aware of the segments being targeted by the AMA chapter. A more multivariable target marketing process would have been considered, but time and budget constraints severely limited the degree to which the unique needs of distinctive segments could be addressed.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Bold objectives for the event included online preregistration of 300 participants resulting in 250 drivers – both numbers were substantially higher than those obtained by any other university taking part in the project up to that point. Because much of the event itself was handled by Jackson-Dawson, customer satisfaction objectives were difficult to develop, but a preliminary goal of 4.0 or better on a 5-point Likert-type satisfaction scale for all aspects of the program was established. It was also hoped that students in the Marketing Principles class would perform better on AIDA-IMC related exam questions than students from previous class sections that did not have the opportunity to take part in the program.

PROGRAM PROMOTION

In order to accomplish participation objectives, it was decided to implement the AIDA-IMC model taught in the Marketing Principles class. The AMA chapter attempted to reach each of the four target markets with a variety of promotional media to enhance target market movement from one stage of the AIDA model to the next.

Along with social media, a variety of conventional, guerilla, and direct sales initiatives were employed. Promotional media included:

1. **Social Media** – Facebook promotion of the event was posted on a variety of Facebook sites including those of Northern Illinois University Convocation Center, Northern Illinois University College of Business, Northern Illinois University AMA chapter, and personal Facebook pages.
2. **Flyers** – Flyers were developed with the assistance of Jackson-Dawson Communications and distributed throughout the College of Business (COB), in Northern Illinois University COB classrooms, across Northern Illinois University campus, on Toppers Pizza boxes delivered to homes in the local community and in Ford auto dealerships.
3. **College of Business Announcement Screens** – Announcements promoting the event were placed throughout the COB building on announcement screens.
4. **Email Messages** – Emails promoting the event were sent by COB faculty to their students, by University COB Advisors, by AMA members to their friends, and by other business majors to their friends.
5. **Conventional Newspaper Coverage** – Northern Illinois University and local newspapers both ran articles covering the event.
6. **Online Newspaper Coverage** – Both Northern Illinois University and local newspapers posted online stories covering the event with Northern Illinois University newspaper providing video coverage.
7. **Online House Organ** – Northern Illinois University ran an extremely informative and promotional article written by University Community Relations. The site is typically viewed by University faculty, staff, and students.
8. **Promotional Tables** – Tables manned by AMA members were set up across campus.
9. **Personal Sales** – COB faculty personally promoted the event in their classrooms on a regular basis; University AMA members promoted the event throughout campus; a local Ford dealership promoted the event at their dealerships; and Enterprise-Rent-A-Car personnel promoted the event to University students at tables set up in a number of locations across campus.

Students in the marketing principles class were not only exposed to many of the media mentioned above, but the AIDA-IMC model was implemented as described in the text and the entire process was discussed and presented to the class. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed illustration of the promotional efforts implemented in the AIDA framework.
COOPERATING PARTNERS AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

In order to successfully promote the 2012 Ford Focus Test Drive event, key partnerships were formed with a variety of entities both on and off campus. Students involved in the marketing of the event were asked to deal directly with organizations in a professional manner that would establish a strong working relationship that would be of importance if and when future events arose. Organizations involved in the event included:

1. **Jackson-Dawson Communications** – Jackson-Dawson personnel provided professional insight into event marketing and hosting of the event. Communications between the AMA Chapter and Jackson-Dawson were frequent and professional.
2. **University Newspaper** – Prior to the event, Northern Illinois University newspaper provided a very well-written article describing and promoting the event. The paper also sent a reporter/photographer/videographer to the event and filmed interviews with participants that were then posted on the paper’s website and on YouTube.
3. **Local Newspaper** – The local newspaper provided extremely professional print and online coverage of the event including interviews and photos.
4. **University Faculty and Staff** – College of Business (COB) faculty and staff were quick to promote and participate in the event. Faculty personally promoted the event in their classes and staff sent email messages describing the event to students in the college.
5. **Convocation Center Staff** – The Convocation Center staff made special arrangements to allow the event to take place at their facility. Special pricing for lot rental was granted and substantial support before, during, and after the event was provided. The event was promoted on the Convocation Center Facebook page and attended by the staff.
6. **University Student Center** – Northern Illinois University Student Center was asked to promote and help stage the event by allowing for a staging table and van pickup.
7. **University Relations** – Personnel at University Relations were quick to write and post a story promoting the event in Northern Illinois University House Organ.
8. **Toppers Pizza** – Toppers Pizza delivered pizza and provided merchandise coupons to hundreds of hungry college students the day of the event. The company also promoted the event to all of their customers via a flyer on the pizza box for two weeks preceding the event. During the busiest times of the event, the company went out of its way to deliver pizza at a substantial discount.
9. **Local Ford Dealership** – A local Ford Dealership provided two sales representatives who were at the event the entire day, a demonstrator vehicle, along with significant financial assistance. The salespeople were helpful in answering post-ride product questions.
10. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** – Enterprise’s assistance with the project was truly exceptional and critical to the success of the project. The firm provided four managers, three trainees, five interns, and three vans used to shuttle participants to and from the College of Business and the Student Center to the Convocation Center.

PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A 26-question survey consisting primarily of Likert-type questions was developed and housed online on QuestionPro software. Event participants were emailed requesting their completion of the survey via ExactTarget software and students in the Marketing Principles class were reminded to complete the survey both in class and via email. In total, 285 participants completed the participant satisfaction survey. Nearly 75% who completed the survey were enrolled in the Marketing Principles class, another 11% were business students, 8% were university students, and 2% were part of the local community. Approximately 45% of participants are male, 70% white, 10% Hispanic/Latino, and 7% African American. Due to the number of students from the College of Business who took part in the event, these percentages roughly mirror those of the College.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

In general, participants in the 2012 Ford Focus Target Hunt program were quite pleased with the event. Over 77% were either Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their experience in the event (only 11.2% were Unsatisfied or Very Unsatisfied). As is illustrated in Table 1, the score of 4.08 on a 5-point Likert-type scale met program objectives.
Table 1: Overall Event Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 285, Mean = 4.08 on 5.0 Likert-Type satisfaction scale, 5 = Very Satisfied

As can be seen in Table 2, there was also a notable pre/post event difference in participant interest in owning a 2012 Ford Focus. Prior to the event, less than 20% of the participants were either Fairly Interested or Very Interested in owning a Ford Focus. Following the event, 41% were Fairly Interested or Very Interested.

Table 2: Participant Interest in Owning a 2012 Ford Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in Owning a 2012 Ford Focus</th>
<th>Pre-Event</th>
<th>Post-Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not interested</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly Interested</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Interested</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 285, Mean Score based on 5.0 Likert-Type interest scale, 5 = Very Interested

Due to a positive experience at the event held at Northern Illinois University Convocation Center, over 78% of survey respondents stated that they would Most Likely or Definitely take part in another event. As Table 3 presents, repeat participation this high could only be possible with a well-executed event.

Table 3: Participant Interest in Taking Part in Another Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No, Definitely Not</th>
<th>Probably Not</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th>Yes, Definitely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 271, Mean = 4.21 on 5.0 Likert-Type interest scale, 5 = Yes, Definitely Interested

**EVENT PROMOTION**

The AIDA-IMC model presented in Appendix A was successfully implemented with promotion of the event by the faculty. As can be seen in Table 4, over 77% of participants were made aware of the event via the college classroom. Word-of-Mouth also proved to be an important element in the AIDA-IMC model with over 15% of survey participants mentioning that they heard of the program through friends or AMA members. The utilization of online media, including Facebook and online news articles, did not contribute as much to the overall promotional process as was anticipated.

Table 4: Promotional Media Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing principles Class</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other NIU Business Classes</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/AMA Member/Word of Mouth</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer at NIU</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU – Northern Star Newspaper Article</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook (any host)</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement Screens inside NIU College of Business</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Rent-A-Car Representative</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU Today Online Article</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer on Toppers Pizza</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU Online Newspaper Article</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Auto Dealership</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EVENT REGISTRATION

As Table 5 illustrates, nearly 84% of survey respondents registered online prior to the event. Those who did pre-register reported a high degree of satisfaction with the process. Also, nearly 82% of respondents were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the online registration process.

Table 5: Online Registration Satisfaction Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 285, Mean = 4.4 on 5 point Likert-Type satisfaction scale

Participants were also satisfied, but not as much so, with the on-site registration process. As can be seen in Table 6, over 75% of respondents were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the on-site registration process on the same 5-point Likert-type scale.

Table 6: Event On-Site Registration Satisfaction Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 285, Mean = 4.4 on 5 point Likert-Type satisfaction scale.

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

Besides the test drive itself, several other on-site activities were made available, all of which were well-received by event participants. Table 7 shows the mean satisfaction score of on-site activities.

Table 7: On-Site Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Water</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raffle</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Instructions</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Drive</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 285, Means based upon 5 point Likert-Type satisfaction scale.

VIDEO RECORDING

Digital video recordings of the participants’ test drives were produced and a link to the recording made available to those test driving. The satisfaction level of the video recording was significantly lower than other aspects of the event. Nearly 40% of participants reported that they had not received a link to the website. Due partially to the number of participants who had not received their test drive link, 79% have not forwarded their test drive on to others. This is the primary cause of the poor level of satisfaction with video recording illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8: Video Recording Satisfaction Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 254, Mean = 3.8 on 5 point Likert-type satisfaction scale, 12.2 % w/no response
ONSITE PROMOTION BY PARTICIPANTS

Over 54% of survey respondents stated that while at the event, or soon after having left, they contacted someone to encourage participation in the event. This particular promotional activity was not specifically encouraged, but opened up opportunities for future events.

MARKETING PRINCIPLES STUDENT LEARNING

Of significant importance is the learning that took place in the mass lecture classroom. Three identical, multiple choice questions regarding the AIDA-IMC concept were asked of students in both the Spring 2011 and Fall 2011 classes. As can be seen in Table 9, with each question, a larger percentage of students in the Fall 2011 class answered the question correctly than did those in the Spring 2011 section.

Table 9: Percentage of Students Answering AIDA-IMC Questions Correctly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2011 – Percentage Correct</th>
<th>Fall 2011 – Percentage Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*AIDA-IMC Question #1</td>
<td>95.25%</td>
<td>97.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*AIDA-IMC Question #2</td>
<td>77.75%</td>
<td>79.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*AIDA-IMC Question #3</td>
<td>56.00%</td>
<td>60.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multiple Choice Question

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Participation far exceeded the pre-established goals to the satisfaction of both Jackson-Dawson and the AMA chapter. When one takes into consideration the poor weather on the day of the event—including very strong winds and rain—a record-breaking turnout was incredible. Also, in nearly every case, a satisfaction level of over 4.0 on the 5-point Likert-type satisfaction scale was achieved. The availability of the video recordings and subsequent social media marketing possibilities is of concern. Students in the Marketing Principles class also learned more about the AIDA-IMC process than did those in previous classes that were not exposed to the event.

KEYS TO PROGRAM SUCCESS

The general success of the 2012 Ford Focus Test Drive event, which took place at Northern Illinois University, cannot be linked to a single factor. The commitment and cooperation of numerous parties all contributed to program accomplishments. Included among the key elements to program success are:

1. Committed Faculty and Staff – By promoting the event and making it an element of the Marketing Principles class, students, and subsequently participants, could readily link the program to what was being addressed in the classroom. With this particular event, the AMA Chapter Advisor had direct access to nearly 500 students, actively promoted the event in class and via email, and incorporated it into his class lectures. Other faculty members promoted the event in their classes and subsequently attended and took part in the event, and staff promoted to students throughout the College of Business.

2. Committed AMA Chapter and Program Chair – The AMA Project Chairperson did an outstanding job in coordinating the event. Her level of professionalism was exceptional and because of her performance several partnering organizations asked to discuss future employment opportunities with her. Her work was so exceptional that she has been officially nominated for the AMA Student Marketer of the Year Award.

3. AIDA-IMC Model Implementation – As can be seen in Appendix A, the proper implementation of the AIDA-IMC model can yield excellent results. Using the event as an in-class case study also proved very beneficial to students in the AMA Advisor’s Marketing Principles class.

4. Cooperative Partners and Communication Among Partners – The list of organizations that contributed to the success of the event is extensive. The communication between Jackson-Dawson and the AMA chapter was excellent. Other organizations, such as Enterprise Rent-A-Car, the local car dealer, the Convocation Center, Toppers Pizza, the College of Business Faculty and Staff, the school newspaper, etc., all were valuable contributors to the event and made the implementation of the AIDA-IMC model possible and the event itself a positive experience for so many participants.
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While the 2012 Ford Focus Target Hunt event held at Northern Illinois University was quite successful, several issues should be addressed which could substantially improve both participation and satisfaction:

1. **More Test Vehicles Must Made Available** – At one point, more than 50 participants were standing in line and waited over 30 minutes to drive. Numerous people explained that while they had registered for the event, they could not wait in line for 30 minutes to drive and had to leave without driving. They assumed that because they pre-registered, they were guaranteed a time slot, and they were obviously disappointed to see a sizeable wait in front of them.

2. **Lengthen the Course and Make it More Challenging** – Another relatively common concern dealt with the length of the course and the challenges that it presented itself. Well over 10% of respondents stated that the course should be lengthened and/or made more challenging.

3. **Improve Video Link Communications** – Because so many people did not receive a link to the video of their test drive, an alarming number of people were very dissatisfied with the social media marketing aspects and lost potential of the event. A much better system for delivering the link of the video recording must be implemented in order to enhance driver satisfaction and maximize the social media marketing aspects of the event. The use of ExactTarget software for sending out the notifications via email is recommended so that spamming can be avoided.

4. **Provide Cover for Those Waiting in Line** – Due to the poor weather and long wait, many survey respondents commented on how they not only had to wait in line for an extended period of time, but had to do so while in the wind and rain as well.

5. **Organize and Coordinate Use of Twitter to Promote the Event** – AMA members, as well as others participating in the event, should be prompted to Tweet their friends promoting the event. One AMA member should be given the responsibility of organizing the Twitter campaign. As Twitter usage continues to grow, this will become an essential aspect of word-of-mouth communication.

6. **Incorporate Four Square** – AMA members, and other participants, should be encouraged to check in with Four Square, encouraging day of walk up participation.

7. **Develop Dealership Promotions** – While the local Ford dealer was very helpful the day of the event, the program could have been better promoted at the dealership and other Ford dealerships in the area. It would help if Ford Motor Company would get involved in the process with their dealer groups.

8. **Incorporate Radio Remote and Public Service Announcement** – In markets where radio remotes are common, an event such as this would be a prime remote event/location. Efforts to coordinate such a radio remote at the Convocation Center were unsuccessful due primarily to the time limitations. A prerecorded public service announcement that would be made available for local radio stations would also be very beneficial.

9. **Offer Demonstrator and Promotional Vehicles** – Numerous survey respondents mentioned that they would have liked to have had another demonstration vehicle available along with product information. While a test vehicle and salesperson from a local Ford dealership was on hand for the entire event, more could be done by Jackson-Dawson for those who show interest in the vehicle.

10. **Provide a Promotional Vehicle to the Location Prior to the Event** – Providing a demonstration vehicle, complete with promotional signage, parked in front of the College of Business in the weeks preceding the event would also have garnered a great deal of attention and interest in the event.

11. **Offer a More Festive and Inviting Environment** – While AMA chapter provided pizza and water, and Jackson-Dawson had appropriate music playing, a much more festive atmosphere would better attract a college target market. Live music, a wider variety of food, other participant challenges, etc. should be considered.

12. **Produce More Professional Flyers, Press Copy, Radio PSAs, etc.** – Jackson-Dawson would be well served if they were to provide participating organizations with more professionally promotional materials, preferably in template formats, so that participating organizations could simply “cut and paste” appropriate dates, times, locations, etc.

In summary, not every aspect of an event such as this can be controlled. However, those involved in the event coordination must do all that is possible to provide those who participate with the best experience possible.
CONCLUSION

The 2012 Ford Focus Target Hunt event held at Northern Illinois University in cooperation with the AMA Chapter and Jackson-Dawson was successful in a number of ways. Both pre-registration and driver objectives were exceeded, as were event satisfaction metrics. AMA students and students in the Marketing Principles class learned a great deal by implementing marketing concepts addressed in their coursework, including AIDA-IMC, social media marketing, yield management, guerilla marketing, etc. Networking opportunities were provided for AMA members who went out of their way to demonstrate their skills and interests. Partnerships were also strengthened and better defined, and hopefully recordings of the event will be widely distributed, and repeatedly redistributed, via social media methodology to assist Ford Motor Company in the marketing of the 2012 Ford Focus.

By addressing the above-mentioned opportunities, an even more successful event is possible. Faculty should strongly consider hosting such events to foster student experiential learning and to form strong strategic alliances by assisting outside organizations in the accomplishments of their corporate objectives.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2012 Ford Focus Test Drive event clearly demonstrates how student organizations cannot only provide valuable services for outside organizations, but do so in a manner comparable to professional firms. In so doing, well-organized projects can bring learning into the classroom via experiential learning pedagogy. As a result, students learn through experience, firms accomplish corporate objectives in a cost effective manner, and strong university-student-corporate relationships can be established and strengthened.

A survey respondent put it quite well – “I liked getting to see how well [Northern Illinois University] relationships are with companies like Ford. It makes me feel like I made the right choice by picking [the college] for my education.”

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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REFERENCES


## APPENDIX

### 2012 Ford Focus Test Drive Event

**AIDA-IMC Implementation Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTENTION</th>
<th>INTEREST</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Marketing Students:** | • In-class Professor Promotion  
• House Organ Article Promotion  
• Toppers Pizza Flyers | • In-class Student Promotion  
• Advisor and Faculty Email Promotion  
• NIU Newspaper story  
• Promotional Flyers  
• Social Media/Facebook Promotion (AMA, COB, and Convocation Center) | **Free Pizza Promotion**  
**COB Non-Marketing Students:** | • In-class Faculty Promotion  
• House Organ Article Promotion  
• Toppers Pizza Flyers | • AMA Incentives  
• AMA and COB Facebook  
• Student sales  
• Word-of-Mouth | **Enterprise Sales & Transportation**  
| **Non-COB Students:** | • House Organ Article Promotion  
• Toppers Pizza Flyers | • NIU Newspaper Story  
• Promotional Flyers  
• Social Media/Facebook Promotion (Convocation Center) | **Dealership Promotion**  
| **Local Community:** | • Toppers Pizza Flyers | • NIU Newspaper Story  
• Promotional Flyers  
• Social Media/Facebook Promotion (Convocation Center) | **Student Sales**  
