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# A Competition Module for a Small Business Management Class

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A COMPETITION MODULE FOR  
A SMALL BUSINESS  
MANAGEMENT CLASS

by

Thomas C. Moore

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

### A Competition Module for a Small Business Management Class

In this study, the author evaluates a condition that exists among many college students, the lack of either willingness or ability to compete with one another in order to achieve objectives. The review of literature indicates that students' inability to compete was predicated by a trend, in recent decades, among educators to focus on students' self image and self esteem rather than on one's accomplishments relative to one's peers. This educational focus has yielded a preoccupation with a concern that no student should ever experience losing. However, with this trend, something was lost, students' capacity to realistically assess their skills and their ability to compete. Research shows that a student's inability to compete can severely compromise the student's potential for success after graduation. A module was developed for inclusion in a Small Business Management class curriculum. The intent of the curriculum is to reintroduce and encourage the concept of competition, and to demonstrate the need to compete in order to be successful in a commercial marketplace after graduation.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

A young boy raises flags high on a pole. One after another, while the flags are flapping in the breeze, the viewers instinctively search for their own U.S. flag, but it is not there. The audience immediately recognizes the flags of other countries. Some of the countries are world powers, some are not; but still there is no flag of the United States. The U.S. flag finally appears at the bottom of 21 others. The announcer suggests, that in education, the United States ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in the world. The announcer draws the obvious conclusion that the best jobs will go to the countries with the best education systems.

Unfortunately, at the primary and secondary levels of education in the United States, the concept of competition among students has not been in favor for quite sometime. According to Kohn (1992), educational theorist and author, “Competition in the classroom not only sabotages relationships and undermines self-confidence but also impedes achievement and long-term interest in learning”(¶28).

Would a country send athletes to the Olympics having never done anything in preparation more strenuous than skipping around the track? Yet, once students have completed their education in the United States, it is expected that these students will be able to compete with other, better prepared students, both here and internationally, having never truly competed, having never even run a practice race. Where might those students stack up competing for the first time, like the flags, maybe 21<sup>st</sup>?

## Statement of Problem

As students move into the post secondary level of their education, they are seemingly well versed in many academic areas. These academic skills should enable the students to function and achieve throughout college. A central purpose of college instruction is to prepare students to be able function and achieve success after college. In addition to the published mission statement of the professional college, the primary goal is a pragmatic one. If nothing else, graduating students need to have the skill set to be able to go out and compete for entry level jobs that will enable them to pay back the thousands of dollars they have undoubtedly borrowed in order to obtain their undergraduate degrees. Unfortunately, the one essential skill that would make this task easier is missing in students when they enter the college system. Quite simply, most students do not know how to compete. The concept of competition as a vehicle to achieve personal goals has been omitted from their otherwise substantial academic resumes. In addition to equipping students with the skills to perform jobs, one of the challenges of the post secondary educator is to introduce and encourage the need for students to compete for those limited jobs and resources available upon graduation.

## Background of the Problem

In recent decades, there has been an educational movement toward the Constructivist Classroom and the Cooperative Learning Model. As cooperative learning became more popular, other traditional types of educational motivation techniques, such as competition among students, began to wane. Research conducted by Johnson, Skon, and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that when a diversified sampling of first graders was presented with educational tasks, in the areas of categorization, retrieval, spatial-



reasoning, and verbal problem-solving, the results from groups using the Cooperative Learning Model were superior to the models that used individualistic or competitive motivation. Johnson et al. showed that students developed higher quality problem solving strategies when working in groups than they did when working individually. These types of results were not unique; other studies had similar findings, especially in non-linguistic areas of learning (Quinn, Johnson, & Johnson, 1995). In the 1980's and 1990's, educators moved to embrace the benefits of cooperative learning while systematically distancing themselves from competition in the classroom (Twenge, 2006). The concept of cooperative learning (CL) was not new. Deutsch (1949) explored the benefits of the concept of competition versus cooperative learning in his research. In recent decades, the sudden and major transition to the CL model effectively abandoned any academic benefits found in extrinsic motivation, such as competition among students. The movement may have had as much to do with a shift in social policy as it did with educational policy. Mutually exclusive goal attainment (MEGA; Sherman, 1996) was the reason cited for the move away from competition as a form of motivation. Battle lines were drawn and there was little mincing of words. As stated by Kohn (2002), "Competition signifies mutually exclusive goal attainment, an arrangement in which one person succeeds only if others fail -- or, in the stronger variety, only by actively making others fail" (p. 29). Ironically, the very people that extolled the virtues of cooperation produced a climate that virtually made it impossible for CL and competition to coexist.

### Definitions

For the purpose of this research project, the author will use the following definitions. The term "*competition*" refers to one or more people performing a task with

more proficiency than another person or group of people. For competition to exist, both sides have to have an equal opportunity to prevail without outside influence. If true competition exists, then all parties should benefit.

For example, if the United States lost the space race, an international competition of the 1960's, and landed on the moon 1 or 2 years after the Russians, would the country then have to give back the technological advances that the space race provided? It was only because the United States entered the space race that new technologies, such as dialysis machines, which were attributed to the Apollo program (Heimerl, 2007), appeared sooner than they otherwise would have. That was a collateral benefit of competition.

The term "*intrinsic*" motivator refers to force that comes from within (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008). Those types of rewards are things such as the satisfaction one can experience through self fulfillment or group accomplishment. This would be a positive intrinsic motivator. Although not addressed in this paper, guilt and obsession would be negative intrinsic motivators. "*Extrinsic*" motivation would be reward or punishment that occurs outside of oneself. Winning a contest or a prize would be considered a positive extrinsic motivator. Pay for doing a job is also an extrinsic motivator. Losing a contest or having to complete extra homework as the result of a poor performance would be a negative extrinsic motivator.

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to reintroduce the competitive skills to students who will be required to compete with others seeking the same opportunities after graduation. Competition, along with its relevance to the marketplace, is introduced in a

curriculum designed for use in the Small Business Management class at the professional college where the author is employed. It is not the intention of this author to introduce competition at the expense of cooperation. Competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive, as some theorists may proclaim. These two conditions do coexist everyday. The students at commercial art colleges understand that the creative commercial arts are always a collaborative effort in which each trade does their little part. Those little parts then come together to become a print ad, a television spot, or an entire corporate identity. Through this module, students should be made aware that, if they wish to participate in collaborative projects in the commercial art world, they must first compete individually in order to be awarded the job.

#### Chapter Summary

As the flags on the pole would indicate, a society that does not participate in competition has little chance of prevailing. In order to benefit from competition, one has to engage in competition. A competitive person would have the ability to take the initiative, to grasp at opportunity, and the resilience to persist when those ambitions went unfulfilled. Society as whole may find these characteristics admirable. Ironically, in education over the last few decades, a trend has developed such that these types of personal qualities have been discouraged. Kohn and other vigorous proponents of Cooperative Learning suggest that these types of people are not winners; they just create losers (Kohn, 1992). Their arguments are not totally without merit. Many studies indicate that children achieve superior academic results under these types of learning conditions. The end goal, however, for educators at the post secondary level is to prepare students for when students leave the sanctuary of school and enter the real world, a much more hostile

and competitive environment. It would be irresponsible for educators not to prepare students to the best of their ability to function in that competitive environment. In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, this author examines the movement in education away from competition among students as well as the unintended consequences of that movement.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Unlike the traditional classroom, where the teacher disseminates information, the constructivist classroom offers the opportunity for students to “construct” their own knowledge. Students accomplish this by incorporating their prior knowledge with new information, thus developing new ideas while openly interacting with others (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). In this scenario, the traditional teacher’s role becomes more of a facilitator of learning rather than a dispenser of information. As the constructivist classroom approach gained in popularity, and specifically, cooperative learning (CL) methods, an educational movement developed that actively opposed traditional, non-interactive, individualistic, and extrinsic, motivation methods, such as competition in the classroom (Kohn, 1992). In this literature review, the author examines the practice of the inclusion of one type of educational model, CL, while systematically excluding competition in the classroom and the potential consequences of those actions.

#### Background

The CL model has been an effective tool in education for many years. In this model, students work in groups to solve problems and attain educational goals. The teacher takes on the role of a facilitator to guide and direct the learning, but the process of learning comes from within the group itself. The group shares a positive interdependence, where students understand that they can reach their individual learning goals only if those learning goals can be attained by everyone in the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). The

positive ramifications of this type of model are numerous. The first, and most profound ramification, is the inclusion of all students in the learning process. If all student outcomes are truly interconnected, there is a true motivation not to leave other less motivated or ostensibly less capable students behind. Second, in CL, a constructivist teaching practice, rather than merely mimicking information, constructivists encourage student to reshape, reform, and transform information into new cognitive structures (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). This type of give and take exchange, encouraged through collaboration, has been shown to increase student interest in any subject by drawing on students' prior knowledge and experiences, thus making new information more relevant. In a study conducted by Quinn, Johnson, and Johnson (1995), the researchers examined 46 other studies conducted from 1929 to 1993 and concluded that, in terms of problem solving, students functioning in the cooperative situation consistently outperformed their counterparts operating in a competitive situation. Other studies, such as ones conducted by Johnson, Skon, and Johnson (1980), and Deutsch (1949) have produced similar results. According to those studies, CL works. This research does note that almost all CL studies and articles retrieved have cited Deutsch's 1949 research as a reference. In fact, Deutsch's work could be considered a foundation of the CL movement. Deutsch (1949) states, "No attempt will be made in this paper to describe and analyze further the wide variety of "impure" cooperative and competitive situations which are found in everyday life" (p. 132). In that statement, Deutsch acknowledges that, in reality, neither cooperative or competitive conditions exist in a vacuum. The question is, does CL in education have to work in a vacuum, at the exclusion of other types of extrinsic motivation?

## Resistance to Competition

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators have always been used in education (Deutsch, 1949). The argument continues, studies indicate that extrinsic motivations are superficial and short lived. According to Sutherland (1993, as cited by Cameron & Pierce, 1994), when people are rewarded extrinsically for an activity they find pleasurable, they perform those activities less often rather than more often. The Sutherland study indicated that the fun in the activity was lost when the extrinsic motivator was introduced. The activity then became a job. In addition, the study suggested that the desire to perform the activity was completely lost when the extrinsic motivation was removed (Cameron & Pierce). When Cameron and Pierce stated that, under certain conditions, extrinsic motivators did not lessen an individual's intrinsic motivation, their position was vehemently refuted in three separate review articles (Lepper, Keavey, & Drake, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 1996; Kohn, 1996). In a later rebuttal article of their own, Cameron and Pierce (1996) addressed their critics' concerns, which strongly criticized their methodology and their "consistent misuse of meta-analytic procedures" (Ryan & Deci, p. 33). The volley of positions and rebuttals gives one insight as to the passion and divisiveness of this discussion. The original Cameron and Pierce (1994) article apparently struck a nerve in order to generate such a prompt and abundant response. Their original findings indicated that CL and extrinsic motivators, such as competition, could co-exist because extrinsic motivators did not lessen an individual's intrinsic motivation. Deutsch (1949) indicated coexistence of both conditions in everyday life, and therefore, excluded "impure" conditions from affecting the results in his research.

From Kohn's (2002) language on the subject, one could infer that the proponents of CL are not looking for common ground on this issue. Some theorists see CL and competition as two diametrically opposed philosophies. Many CL supporters do not see a need for extrinsic motivation. Kohn's opinions on competition paint a very negative picture; "in such a classroom it is not "How well are they learning?" but "Who's beating whom?" The ultimate purpose of good colleges, this view holds, is not to maximize success, but to ensure that there will always be losers" (¶23). Traditional contests like spelling bees would be considered too extrinsically motivated. As Kohn (1992) explained,

.... choosing only the best papers to be displayed on the wall, playing games such as spelling bees that sort children into winners and losers, forcing them to try to edge each other out for school wide awards -all of these explicit contests, along with the subtler competition for recognition and approval in the classroom, teach children one enduring, fundamental message: Other people are potential obstacles to my own success. (¶ 28)

CL proponents see competition as counterproductive to the educational goals of children and educational institutions, even if one of the goals of the institution is to prepare those students to function in a competitive world. Extrinsic motivation like grades and student ranking is another way for education to sort students for colleges, graduate schools, and the job market (Kohn, 2002).

In summary, CL advocates fear competition because it may exact a price on someone's self image (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Ironically, the very educational strategy designed to protect students may be hurting them. In her book, Twenge (2006) portrays the subject generation born between in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as more depressed than previous generations largely because of unfulfilled expectations. "Years



of self-esteem instruction, of being told you are special and can do anything, leave us confused and hurt by the harsh reality of many jobs” (Twenge, 2006, p.130). Eventually, upon graduation, those students will be sorted, by themselves or by others. It is the nature of society (Berger, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Twenge, 2006). Experience with some forms of competition prior to graduation may have prepared the students with a better understanding of where they might end up in the deck.

### Competition’s Effect on Groups

Depending on the specific group, the same competitive situations may have different results. After all, when one paints with too broad a brush, one is bound to miss a few spots. That is why some would argue that a diversified approach to motivation may work best in a diverse classroom. The relative effectiveness of competition in the classroom could potentially be as varied as the individual groups represented, but that is beyond the purpose of this paper. This researcher did examine two of the larger groups. Specifically, how does the introduction of competition affect students with special needs, and are there gender differences in response to competitive situations?

### *Competition and Special Needs Students*

Confused by contradicting outcomes of studies on the effect of competition on reading comprehension, Bolocofsky (1980) set forth to find out if there were other factors influencing the different outcomes. Specifically, does the cognitive style of the subject have an effect on performance when competition is used as a motivating factor? To determine the subjects learning style type, the author used The Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) to establish the “field dependence” or “field independence” of the subject. Prior research indicated that field independent subjects were more likely to be

intrinsically motivated while the field dependent subjects or learners were more extrinsically motivated (Bolocofsky, 1980). The results seem to validate the hypothesis that the competitive class environment has a much more positive effect on the field dependent students than it did on the field independent students.

According to Bolocofsky (1980), these results might have a significant bearing on how the education community treats special needs students. According to research cited in his study, the special needs students tend to be field dependant and thus may benefit more from extrinsic motivators, such as competition in the classroom. Ironically, it is these very children that the CL community is trying to protect by removing competition from the classroom. The notion that competition can only hurt these children's fragile self esteem may have to be re-thought. Self esteem is stronger in a student when it is built from accomplishment rather than accommodation (Twenge, 2006).

### *Competition and Gender*

Historically, males have engaged in inter-group rivalries. Such rivalries have yielded benefits for males, such as status, access to mates, territory, and other spoils, which have perpetuated the species. For males, these benefits often outweigh the risks of personal sacrifice to attain them (VanVugt, DeCremer, & Janssen, 2007). Conversely, rather than an inter-group dynamic, females' strength may be found in interpersonal interaction (Berger, 2006; Gilligan, 1993). Therefore, the female inter-personal dynamic may be more suitable for CL, where the male inter-group dynamic might be considered more individualistic. In the VanVugt et al. experiment the responses of the men changed as the extrinsic, competitive motivation changed, and the female responses did not.

Men engage more frequently in competitive inter-group interactions than women do (VanVugt, et al., 2007). Thus, men's behaviors are more inter-group oriented than women's. The researchers refer to this as the "*male warrior hypothesis*" (p.19). If this hypothesis is true, males may, when compared to females, increase their altruistic responses to a social-dilemma task if they believe it will benefit the group in an inter-group competition.

In experiment one, VanVugt et al. told subjects that they were participating in an investment exercise. Students were given a small endowment, which they could either invest with the group or retain for themselves. If the group met an investment goal, each member would be paid a dividend. This would be paid to each individual regardless of whether or not he or she invested. If the group did not meet the goal, only the investors would lose their money. In experiment one, the investment option was limited to an all or nothing proposition. The subjects could not choose to risk only a portion of their endowment. Subjects were told of other regional, potentially rival, universities conducting the same experiment. The test subjects were divided randomly into two groups. One group was told that they would be evaluated as individuals to see how they fared against other individuals in the experiment. The other group was told that they would be evaluated to see how the group from Southampton University did against group members from the other schools. Experiment two was similar, except subjects had the option to invest or risk part of their endowment rather than the all or nothing condition imposed in the first experiment. Experiment three had a group identification element attached. Subjects were asked to answer five questions about their group (VanVugt, et al., 2007).

In experiment one, men participated 40% less in the individual condition than they did in the group condition. For the men, the risk of the endowment was not worth the reward of the dividend if the goal was not met. Only when the men were competing as a group, did participation climb to almost 90%. Experiment one demonstrates men become more altruistic and will risk what they would not otherwise be willing to risk if the group dynamic was not involved. Women subjects, in the same experiment, actually participated less in the group condition than they did in the individual condition.

Experiment two allowed participants to risk part of their endowment rather than the all or nothing scenario. The results for women bared virtually no difference in the individual versus group condition. For women, participation was actually more similar in the two conditions than it was in experiment one. Conversely, even though given the option to adjust contributions, men still participated more in the group condition than they did in the individual condition.

Does strong identification with a group affect participation? Experiment three asked this question. The researchers intentionally identified regional competitive universities as the other groups participating in the experiment. These universities were chosen on the basis of data indicating which other institutions students applied to before attending Southampton (VanVugt et al., 2007). These selections set the stage for group identification, rivalry and competition.

In this experiment, there was once again little difference in the female subjects' participation in the individual or group condition, regardless of the strong identification with the group. Males showed a different response. VanVugt et al. (2007) state that,

“These results show that men’s cooperative behavior increases during inter-group competition because an inter-group threat enhances males’ group identification” (p. 22).

The results of the VanVugt et al.(2007) research indicated that the males may be more motivated by the competitive dynamic than females. Men tend to make competitive and risky choices when faced with group dilemmas, especially when group identity is at stake. These choices may not necessarily be the best choices, but they are clearly more aggressive than those made by their female counterparts and seem to be influenced by extrinsic rather than intrinsic considerations. This research seems to support the *male-warrior hypothesis*. This hypothesis would seemingly account for a difference in social decision making between males and females.

#### *Relevance for Curriculum Design*

One may extrapolate that, if this study is indicative of most male behavior, competition as a motivational tool, may be more effective with males than with females. This should, of course, be considered when designing curriculum, but this should not excuse females from participating in competitive exercises and assignments. Education is all about working outside one’s comfort zone from time to time in order to grow. Men and women will eventually compete in the same market environment, so similar educational experiences would undoubtedly benefit both groups.

#### The Case for Competition

People think competition is all about winning; it is not. Competition is much about resilience in defeat, overcoming a disappointment, and then again striving to win. If one wins all the time, then the result is predetermined and, by definition, there is no competition. Therefore, in order for there to be true competition, one has to compete

against an opponent capable of winning. In terms of education, the most substantial collateral benefits of competition are not the rewards for winning, but the lessons learned in competing (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008). Being successful or winning merely marks the end of one journey. This may be a milestone to be sure, but only until one sets another, more difficult, goal.

The more substantial benefits from competition come only from courting its perils. Being able to work through with negative aspects of competition, such as, self doubt, performance anxiety, coping with stress, and the risk of failure can have positive benefits to the individual who has mastered them. It is a powerful thing when someone realizes for the first time that preparation and hard work may lead to success, but it never guarantees it (Moore, 2008). According to Twenge (2006), people born between 1970 and 1990 have a feeling of entitlement. From the time they were small, they have had parents intervene on their behalf. She asserts that protests for better grades, campaigns against presumably biased teachers, non compatible classmates, and anything else that the student perceived to be unfair were commonplace. True competition, by its nature, is somewhat immune to entitlement and outside intervention. As any parent who has ever watched a baseball game knows, nobody outside the fence can play the game for anybody inside the fence, no matter how much they may want to. With competition comes some risk, so it has to be managed. As stated by Ozturk and Debelak (2008),

On their own, they may not muster the emotional and psychological wherewithal to be resilient in defeat and humble in victory. Nor may they master the skills to cope with the psychological challenges in competition, such as anxiety and pressure. Therefore, the educator should introduce students to competition while carefully overseeing their psychological and emotional experience. This is what we would call "soft competition." Soft competition does not mean easy competition. Rather, it describes a process in which the child is encouraged to engage in the competition with

its entire rigor, yet this engagement is under the supervision of a caring adult who guides the child through emotional and psychological challenges. (p. 52)

Competition detractors point out and are concerned about those students who feel that if they cannot win, then they will just no longer try and disengage (Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Rimm, 1997). Then, that is not true competition. If participants have no chance of winning, then the educators have mismanaged the exercise and the groups need to be reestablished. If the competitive groups are fair, and the student still chooses to disengage, than that is something else and a lesson can be also learned from that choice. Twenge (2006) provided a possible explanation, “It may be easier to protect one’s sense of self worth by not trying than to try and still not succeed” ( p. 147). Therefore, another argument against competition pivots on self esteem. Not winning a competition may damage a students self esteem. As presented by Twenge (2006) in “Generation Me,” Psychologist Martin Seligman indicates that self esteem programs and the concerns they address are shortsighted. When self esteem is promoted that is based on nothing, the feelings of self that children gain can be superfluous. Self esteem does not cause superior performance, it is the result of it (Twenge, 2006). Twenge (2006) also concludes, “Sooner or later however, everyone has to face reality and evaluate his or her abilities” (p. 102). A controlled competitive environment provides an ideal situation to accurately access ones’ strength and weaknesses. Finally, as Ozturk and Debelak (2008) assert that if competition continues to exist in the real world, than it is one’s duty as an educator to introduce students to competition, while maximizing its benefit and mitigating its potential harm. They state, “If we just thrust our children into a competitive world without preparation, we do them a disservice” (p. 52).

## Chapter Summary

The research presented in this paper indicates that cooperative learning works. The question remains, should CL be introduced into the classroom at the exclusion of all other extrinsic motivation, specifically competition? According to the many advocates for the CL model (Kohn, 1992; 2002) and others, the answer is yes. According to those authors, competition leads to the lowering of students' self-esteem, the decrease in motivation and to the arbitrary sorting of students (Kohn). The introduction of competition and other types extrinsic motivations undermine more effective intrinsic motivation techniques and should be omitted from education. Contrary to these opinions, some research seems to indicate otherwise; elevated self-esteem is not a predictor of superior grades or test scores (Twenge, 2006), and the introduction of extrinsic motivation does necessarily have a negative effect on intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). As to the sorting of students, people tend to sort themselves. Evidence of sorting is everywhere. State governments make money by producing vanity license plates that identify one group from another; the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, fire fighters, and honorably discharged veterans are just some groups sorted by their designer license plates. Alumni associations sell spirit wear across the country to fans who will never get near a stadium, but still want to be part of a group identification. Parades in every municipality allow participants to sort themselves and declare pride in one ethnic group or another. As suggested by Twenge (2006), students may as well get started sorting and comparing themselves to each other now because everyone else will, from college admissions officers to employers. If one accepts the premise that eventually all students will enter a more competitive setting after elementary and secondary school,



then excluding competition from all school curriculum may be shortsighted. Educational goals and student preparedness should trump ideological differences. That may mean that educationally effective intrinsic motivation may need to be combined with reality based extrinsic motivation in order to achieve the desired post graduation outcome. In Chapter 3, the author describes the method used to design a model curriculum which combines both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational methods.

## Chapter 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this project is to prepare students, for the competitive work environment they will enter after graduation. This was accomplished by developing a business curriculum module that requires that students compete against each other individually or in groups. In this module, specific career goals are identified. In the competitive activities, those career goals are used as the incentive. It is not the intention of this author to introduce competition while excluding cooperative learning. One of the objectives of this curriculum is to demonstrate that extrinsic and intrinsic motivational methods not only coexist but often are also codependent.

#### Target Audience

In the Photography Department at the professional college where the author is engaged as an instructor, the targeted postsecondary student population is largely female and predominately under 21 years of age. Most of this population has had little or no college experience prior to attending the institution. There is, however, a smaller population of students who are older, in their mid to late 20's, with either some college experience or degrees. There is also a very small portion of the students who have a good deal of work experience and are reentering school to seek a career change. These students, because of their work experience, may have more experience with competition.

## Organization of Curriculum Module

The competition module is designed for completion over 4 weeks of an 11-week term. The curriculum includes separate lectures and assignments placed intermittently throughout the term in a Small Business Management class. The lectures in the competition module, being non-contiguous, allow time for students to research and prepare presentations. This also illustrates that competition is an ongoing activity. In some of the assignments, a cooperative approach to work with one's classmates is required in order to achieve objectives. In other exercises, only individual efforts may be required. These seemingly contradictory conditions should demonstrate two things to the students. First, there is no one-way to accomplish a particular task. Second, competition and cooperation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The author, in addition to being an instructor, has been a professional photographer for over 25 years. He therefore stipulates, the need to consistently demonstrate professional relevance as essential for this module to be effective. The competition module identifies specific career competencies as the basis for all coursework. Therefore, in Chapter 4, before each lesson or activity, the market relevance is established. Given the target audience's age and experience, the practical nature of the exercises needs to be understood and accepted in order for the students to truly engage in the curriculum. The competition curriculum module is structured to include a section that defines the market principle on which the lesson is based and a lesson plan flow chart. The market principle section includes learning outcomes and evaluation sections when those areas directly relate to the market principle involved. The lesson plan flow chart includes lecture notes and potential discussion topics for the following areas:

1. Title
2. Lesson Plan Overview
3. Professional Market Relevance
4. Learning Objectives
5. Resources, Materials, Lectures and Guest Speakers
6. Activities and Exercises
7. Post Assessment and Evaluation
8. Time Schedules

#### Peer Assessment Plan

For immediate short term feedback on the curriculum module designed for this project, this author asked the department director and two other faculty members, who also teach subjects relating to career development, to evaluate the module to determine its relevance of in our program. Their feedback and suggestions are discussed in Chapter 5.

#### Chapter Summary

Direct competition with one's peers, as a means to achieve personal and group goals, is introduced in a competition module of a Small Business Management curriculum. The module's activities are conducted on both a group and individual basis to reinforce the concept that competition and cooperation are often co-dependant. Individual or group "real world" relevance in this module is of paramount concern. Competing for the sake of competing is of little value. When there is relevance and all parties truly compete, even those parties that do not prevail can gain knowledge that can be used in assessment that may aid in future competitions. A primary goal of the curriculum is to bolster students' resilience and their personal resolve to continue to compete, regardless of preliminary outcomes. In addition, in order to effectively compete, one needs to be able to accurately establish one's strengths and weaknesses as well as

those of their opponents. In Chapter 4, the practical criteria for the competition module criteria are discussed and weekly outlines for the competitive curriculum module are presented.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of the competition module is to introduce students to the concept of competing with one another as a means to achieve personal goals after graduation. The small business management class curriculum is an ideal place for the insertion of such a module because it emphasizes that a superior product and skills alone are not enough to achieve success. The course is designed to instruct students in the practical matters and laws that govern the running of a small business. The competition module does not follow a conventional lesson plan model. Conventional lesson plans include topics that are designed to reassure administrators and governing bodies of the viability of a curriculum and of the potential effectiveness of faculty, not for the consumption of students. As a professional photographer and faculty member at a professional postsecondary college, this author is not accountable to either of those two entities, just to his students. Therefore, this module is designed for the target audience, an adult student population. The case for the relevance of the curriculum has to be made directly to them. The lesson plan follows a simple format, which includes: (a) relevance to the professional market place and each student's particular situation; (b) learning objectives; (c) resources, materials, lectures, guest speakers, including anecdotal evidence that supports the practical principle of the concept being introduced; (d) activities, both collaborative and individual, that have practical market applications; and (e) assessment by peers and/or

instructors in a public forum or critique, which often rank an individual or group relative to another.

Small Business Management

Competition Module

Winter/ 2009



## COMPETITION MODULE

### Introduction

In preparation for this project, this author posed a question to one of his classes. “How do you people feel about competition in school?” There reaction was immediate and almost unanimously negative. One female student yelled out “I hate to fight!” The question was not, “How do you feel about fighting?” The question was about competition, but from the reaction, it was obvious that the difference between competition and fighting was unclear to the students and that this module might be met with some resistance. This module is designed for the postsecondary level at a professional college. For it to be effective, it needs to be accepted and even embraced by the adult student audience. Therefore, it is the students who this author addresses. Each lesson and activity is predicated by a practical marketplace principle. These principles explain why competition is important for students’ individual professional success and eventual control over their personal situation.

### Module Overview

The module is made up of four lessons based on four professional market principles. The module stresses that students need to develop skills in order to surpass their competition in the following areas: portfolio or product development, presentation skills, the capacity to adjust to the competition and market needs, and the ability to provide easy access and delivery of one’s products and services. Both group and individual activities and assignments are included in this module. Student work will be

evaluated in a group critique, whether the assignment is designated as a student competition or not. Transparency in evaluation reaffirms that individual success is always relative to the group's performance.

### Personal Assessment

Personal assessment is an essential step in any competitive process. To be professionally viable, one must be able to evaluate what one excels at, and what one should avoid. The topic of personal assessment includes evaluation in two areas: portfolio evaluation and presentation skills; both are essential professional competencies and are essential if one is to be successful professionally.

### Lesson One

Portfolio evaluation: In the competition module, this lesson is designed to require students to rank and compare their work to the work of others. Assessing skills in a vacuum is meaningless. Students may feel that they excel at something, when in fact, compared to the group, they may be only average. Given ranking data, students can objectively evaluate their performance with respect to the rest of the student sampling. They can use this information to either continue the creative direction of their portfolio or develop a new direction in order to be more competitive. Just as importantly, the student has to learn to accept the portfolio evaluation as objective. Students who are unfamiliar with competition may feel that the initial ranking is subjective or unfair (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008). The ability to move past negative feelings, whether based in fact or not, is vital if the student is going to utilize the information gathered to one's advantage.

### *Activity*

Using their own preexisting work of between 10 and 25 pieces, students are required to construct two portfolio presentations. In the first, students prepare a static slide show presentation of the portfolio pieces. In the second, using the same portfolio pieces, the students construct an animated sideshow presentation; students are encouraged, but not required, to use image movement, appropriate slide transitions, and sound. The maximum length of the second presentation will be restricted to 90 seconds. During the lecture process, prior examples of presentations will be reviewed along with various software options for completing the task. Students will be allowed to use their own presentation software, school software, or students may use existing software found on all computers for the completion of this task, such as I movie on MACs or Movie Maker on PCs.

### *Evaluation*

Students evaluate each static presentation for professional criteria provided on a questionnaire (see Appendix A, Portfolio Evaluation Form) and make suggestions for improving the portfolio as a body of work. Then each students will rank each of the static presentations from most effective to least effective based on their personal preferences. The facilitator will do the same and place his results on the dry erase board. At this time, there should be a brief open discussion or debate as to the validity of the instructor's rankings. Students should be encouraged to defend any disputes as to why one body of work is better than another. The instructor's and student's opinions, although defensible, do not have to be completely objective. This is in keeping with the learning objective of this exercise. Students must be able to accept, if not agree, with evaluation of their work

and detach from personal feelings that stand in the way of portfolio improvement. This is also an ideal time for the instructor to point out some of the flaws that commonly afflict student portfolios, such as the notion that a body of work is only as good as its weakest piece. After this portion of the activity is complete, the animated versions of the portfolios should be reviewed. Students should then reexamine their rankings to see if any have changed based on the same material being presented in a different manner. A group discussion should evaluate any changes in the rankings. When animated, did some portfolios gain status compared to the others, or did some lose status? Even if the rankings remained the same, when a presentation is compared to its own alternate version, what are the perceived differences? These discussion topics lead into Lesson Two, "Presentation Skills."

## Lesson One Plan Outline:

### Title: Personal Assessment/ Portfolio Evaluation

**Lesson Plan Overview:** Portfolio evaluation: In this lesson, students need to objectively compare their opinions of their work, versus the assessment of others. The evaluation will allow students to determine where their work ranks, when compared to other students who are at a similar point in the program. Assessing skills in a vacuum is meaningless. Students may feel that they excel one area, when in fact, when compared to the group, they may be only average. In keeping with the learning objectives, the evaluation process can be somewhat subjective and should not be overly concerned with the student's feelings. The evaluation also contains constructive criticism, in the form of an portfolio evaluation questionnaire, which is filled out by other students, that specifically identifies how the student can improve. Finally, through the use of multimedia, this lesson contains a transition to Lesson Two "Presentation Skills."

Topic	Key Points	Notes:
Professional Market Relevance	The photographer's product is the portfolio. All potential business hinges on an outstanding portfolio. All professional portfolios must demonstrate certain competencies in order to be viable: Technical Skills: Camera, Lighting, and Composition Esthetic Skills: Subject matter, Creativity, Style, and Presentation	Ask the question: consider the portfolios you have seen, all other things being equal, who would you hire? The case for professional relevance of a portfolio is a pretty easy one to make.
Learning Objectives	Professionalism, resulting in a personal detachment from one's work in order to objectively interpret and utilize criticism to one's advantage. Personal resilience in the face of that criticism. The ability identify personal portfolio strengths and weaknesses when compared to one's peers.	Students might feel the truly good at something when in fact when compared to the group they may be only average. Assessing skills in a vacuum is meaningless. Given this ranking information, students can evaluate their area of career concentration.
Recourses, Materials, Lectures, and Guest Speakers	Lecture on portfolio piece selection Review prior student portfolio samples Review professional portfolio samples online compare and contrast those examples as benchmarks.  Presentation software demonstrations. i.e. I Movie, Movie Maker, Pro Show Gold, and Premiere Pro. Editing and slide transition lecture.	Portfolio pieces should be selected because the images can not only stand alone, but can also work together as a group, like articles in a magazine. Students unfamiliar with film editing, transitions, and moves (pans, pulls, and pushes) should be made aware that sometimes less is more. The do and don'ts of animation can be easily illustrated when demonstrating the software.
Activities and Exercises	Using their own preexisting work, of between 10 and 25 pieces, students are required to construct two portfolio presentations. The first, a static slide show presentation of the portfolio	

	pieces. The second, using the same portfolio pieces, the students construct an animated sideshow presentation; the use of image movement, appropriate slide transitions, and sound will all be encouraged, but not required. The maximum length of the second presentation will be restricted to 90 seconds presented in a .mov or .mp4 format.	
Post Assessment and Evaluation	<p>Students will evaluate each static presentation for the professional criteria provided on a evaluation form (see Appendix A, Portfolio Evaluation Form) and make suggestions for improving the portfolio as a body of work. At the end of the discussions, these forms will be collected and then redistributed to the portfolio's author to provide feedback. Students will rank each of the static presentations from most effective, to least effective based on their personal preferences. The facilitator will do the same and place his results on the dry erase board.</p> <p>An open forum discussion and debate should then follow about the rankings. At this point the facilitator should probably listen more than speak. After the first discussion is complete the animated versions of the portfolios are then reviewed. Students should then reexamine their rankings to see if any portfolios have changed position based on the same material being presented in a different manner. A group discussion should evaluate any changes in the rankings.</p>	<p><b>Discussion topics for the evaluation part one:</b></p> <p>What was the most important reason you ranked #1 in that spot?  How important was continuity of the images in terms of subject matter or style?  Did too many images of one subject type make you bored, did too few make the presentation feel too sporadic?  Consider the portfolio you like best, what kind of assignments should that photographer be looking for, and where should they look?</p> <p>Which portfolio, in your opinion, is the most commercially viable, is that the one you ranked #1?</p> <p>The last discussion topics are designed to make the students think about application as well as content.</p> <p><b>Discussion topics for the evaluation part two:</b></p> <p>Did the presentation format change your opinion of the portfolios?  Which presentation benefited the most from animation and which ones did not?  Do you think that if one portfolio was only presented in the first static format and one was only presented in the second animated format they could be evaluated against each other objectively?</p> <p>This last topic is a transition topic to Lesson Two "Presentation Skills"</p>
Time Schedules	<p>Initial Lecture and software demonstrations 120 minutes  Portfolio evaluation assignment due three weeks after lecture  Evaluation lecture and discussion 120 minutes</p>	

## Lesson Two

### *Presentation Skills*

Personal assessment in evaluating the content of one's portfolio is important. It is also important to assess one's strengths and weakness in presenting that portfolio. In most commercial ventures, presentation skills are critical to success. If more than one party is competing for the same goal, those with presentations that are merely adequate often lose out to superior presentations, regardless of the product. In this curriculum, students are made aware of many of the components that comprise a winning presentation. (Many criteria of a good presentation are offered in Appendix B, Presentation Skills Evaluation Form.) As in all competitions, students need to understand that, if they are less than proficient in one area, then they need to emphasize the areas in which they are strong. In Lesson Two of the competition module, the lecture materials, anecdotal examples, instructor demonstrations, and a field trip to a professional studio all emphasize that the following presentation competencies are commercially relevant and critical for professional success:

**Professional appearance:** This includes all collateral materials and facilities as well as personal appearance, physical presence, body language, and eye contact.

**Speaking skills:** Verbal communication is probably the most important way most people gather and disseminate information. The ability to speak in a well paced, comfortable, candid, and professional manner is very important. This student population has a tendency to confuse comfortable with casual. Business communication needs to be more formal than what many students are familiar with delivering.

Preparedness: A person should not only know the facts about what they are presenting, but they should be able to anticipate the questions of the audience pertaining to that presentation. Preparedness of the presenter will also help with speaking cadence.

Writing skills: Writing is often overlooked. More often than not, the opportunity to speak with someone face to face does not occur unless one can first communicate in writing. Written words, such as a letter of introduction, promotional pieces, or web copy, often precede verbal communication.

Multimedia skills: In business, as positions of power move steadily to the generation born between 1970 and 1990, the ability to communicate digitally through multi-media has become essential. The reasons are two fold: 1) This generation has a relatively short attention span. They are used to seeing things that move. Therefore, one should provide the audience with what they want and what they may be eager to see. 2) A well produced multi-media presentation, such as a PowerPoint™, or video, may also mitigate any of the presenter's performance anxiety and should shift emphasis away from any less polished elements of the presentation.

#### *Activity*

This module requires students to practice making a presentation. In this exercise, each group will pick a service and make a presentation of that service (other than their own photography services) to the rest of the class. By omitting photography services, the presenters are not emotionally attached, which allows participants to concentrate entirely on the presentation. This activity is conducted in very small groups, which allows individual members to evaluate their skills and determine how best they can contribute to the group. This activity is conducted as a competition. Students are required to research



the service, collect collateral materials, script and make a preliminary mock sales call, and script and deliver a 5 minute presentation, using whatever multimedia resources are necessary to win the competition.

### *Evaluation*

The participants determine by vote which service is best, based solely on the presentation. The only restriction is that votes can not be cast for one's own group. The facilitator could break any ties. Groups are graded relative to their votes. Groups with the least votes are graded down relative to the other group presentations on a graduated scale.

### *Learning Objectives*

This activity should benefit students in at least two ways. First, prior to the competition, in order have a successful presentation, the students would need to be able to accurately appraise and emphasize their particular strengths while de-emphasizing any weaknesses. Second, because the competition's outcome is judged on a graduated scale, some groups, despite their efforts, will not achieve success relative to the larger group. So then what? This question needs to be posed often so that when students do not succeed, they develop resilience and a positive coping mechanism in order to adapt and overcome adversity.

In a competitive environment, "commercial Darwinism" is constantly at play. Those who cannot adapt cease to exist. Students must have the ability to be flexible and adapt to any situation that is influenced by the competition and the market need. These areas are addressed in Lesson Three.

**Lesson Two Plan Outline:  
Title: Personal Assessment/Presentation Skills**

**Lesson Plan Overview:** Presentation Skills: In this lesson, students need to objectively assess their presentation skills. Working in small groups in a cooperative effort, students will identify, research, and present a service business to the rest of the class. Students are required to research the service, collect collateral materials, script and make preliminary mock sales calls, and script and present a 5 minute presentation, using any multimedia resources necessary to win the competition for most compelling presentation. The lectures will consist of a demonstration presentation, anecdotal samples of excellent and poor business presentations, and a field trip to a professional studio where the professional presentation is outstanding. The goal of this lesson is to make students aware that, when competing for business opportunities, a superior presentation is often as important as a superior product.

Topic	Key Points	Notes:
Professional Market Relevance	A good presentation communicates knowledge, confidence, experience, an eagerness to work, and an ability to communicate and respond to changing conditions, to a potential client. A poor presentation communicates the opposite.	Ask the question, What allows some restaurants to charge \$45-\$100 per meal and some cannot. Is the food really that much better? What is the difference? When you go on vacation to a resort that you have never been before and was not referred by someone, what was the basis for your decision?
Learning Objectives	Students would need to be able to accurately appraise and emphasize their particular strengths while de-emphasizing any weaknesses. Students will also have to overcome any fear of making a public presentation. Therefore, practice in presentations may be as valuable to the students as any cognitive gains. Groups will have learn to function together in order to maximize their effectiveness.	The competition component will force students to evaluate their group's presentation versus the presentation of others. As a result, some things may occur, presentation quality could improve because only one group will receive the "sale" or an A. The groups, that do not win, may harbor some hard feelings because in all likelihood they worked hard also. How do they cope with that?
Recourses, Materials, Lectures, and Guest Speakers	The lecture includes anecdotal evidence of many industries where much of their success and market share is based on presentation. Entertainment, leisure, travel, and finance, to name a few. A field trip to a professional studio where presentation is of paramount importance should be scheduled. The studio owner (guest speaker) can emphasize that point while in the surrounding he or she created as part of his or her presentation. A short demonstration presentation by the facilitator on a similar subject will serve as	<b>Discussion topics:</b> The dos and don'ts of public speaking, including notes, body language, and scripting. The use of multimedia presentations to keep on point. In presentations, less is more, give yourself a time limit. In a presentation, the presenter should be uncomfortable to ask for what they want, a assignment, a job, a sale, or a referral. What is the cost effectiveness of some presentation aids and techniques, you must get a return for the money.

	an example	If the instructor is not comfortable making a demonstration presentation that will generate excitement, it should be omitted.
Activities and Exercises	This activity is conducted in very small groups which would allow team members to evaluate their individual skills relative to the group in order sell a service. In this exercise, each team will pick a service and make a presentation of that service to the entire group. This activity is conducted as a competition. Students are required to, research the service, collect collateral materials, script, and make preliminary mock sales calls, and script and present a 5 minute presentation, using any multimedia resources necessary to win the competition.	Students should be encouraged to play to their strength. If a group does not have member that is capable of generating excitement in a 5 minute monologue then the group should consider other options in their presentations. Multimedia, printed collateral material, <b>interactive</b> solutions may be needed to keep the audiences interest.  A group with more technological savvy may have an advantage
Post Assessment and Evaluation	The audience would determine by vote, which service is best, based solely on the presentation. The only restriction is that votes can not be cast for one's own group. The facilitator could break any ties. Groups would be graded relative to their votes. Groups with least votes would be graded down relative to the other group presentations on a graduated scale.  To aid in the voting, the participant audience will evaluate each presentation for various presentation criteria provided on a evaluation form (see Appendix B, Presentation Evaluation Form) and make suggestions for improving the presentation. At the end of the discussions these forms will be collected and then redistributed to the presenters to provide feedback.	<b>Discussion topics:</b> What was the most important reason you voted for #1? What made it better than the other presentations? How did your team work together, was there a leader? How did you decide who did what? What was the most difficult part of putting together your presentation? In your experience, when was the last time, in a commercial setting, someone made a presentation to you. Was it effective? What about your admissions experience here, did the admission representative use any of these techniques?  What about making phone calls, can you do that? Do you think email works for initial contact? When people contact you (who you do not know) what gets your attention, and how?  The last discussion topics are designed to make the students think initial interaction. The opportunity to make a presentation has to be earned.
Time Schedules	Initial Lecture, presentation demonstration, and field trip 240 minutes Presentation assignment due three weeks after lecture Presentations and discussion 180 minutes	

## Lesson Three

### *Appraise the Competition*

Only after one evaluates his or her own strengths and weakness can one objectively appraise the strengths and weaknesses of the competition. In a competition, the opponent's strengths and weaknesses are only relevant as they relate directly to one's own strengths and weaknesses. For example, if a baseball player wants to break into the starting line up at a certain position, and he determines that the starting shortstop's arm is not very accurate, he can use this to his advantage only if his arm is appreciably better. If it is not, then the opponent's skill deficit is of little relevance. Once the assessment has been made, the course of action is to take advantage of the opponent's deficit, which is in direct contrast to a personal strength. One such advantage new competitors may have when entering an existing market is that they are not necessarily attached to old technology; where as, established companies may be, because of financial necessity. In certain fields, like commercial photography, technology changes almost daily. One advantage that new graduates of professional schools have is that their expertise and the equipment they were trained on are often based on the newest technology. The ability to incorporate current technology in a new enterprise is often easier than retooling an existing one. Therefore, the use of technology may be an area where new businesses can gain some advantage over their competitors.

### *Evaluate the Market*

When assessing a potential market to enter, the business owner has to consider many things, one of the most important is the market needs of today versus where that market need will be in 5, 10, or in 20 years. It could be very beneficial for a business to

be a supplier of goods and services in a burgeoning market. The new business and the market could conceivably grow together. However, if the market does not have a significant need for a company's goods or services at present, then the ability to sustain a new business in order for it to grow with the market may not be possible. Therefore, there has to be empirical evidence that supports that there is a need for a company's service and a realistic appraisal of the competition which is currently filling that need.

### *Activity*

Research is a key element to success in any business endeavor. In this activity, students research the professional market they wish to enter. The information gathered by the students is made available to the group. The class has determined specific fields they wish to have included in a cooperative database, (see Appendix C, Cooperative Database Fields). The cooperative database is placed online and acts as a reference for the present and future classes. The information in this database will be updated and added to by successive classes making the database more powerful with each class' participation. Students are required to choose a city and add to the database in the following areas: (a) four client direct contacts; (b) two design firms or advertising agencies; (c) two of the prominent photographers; (d) one or two photography alumni located in that city. Client direct contacts are companies that produce media for internal or external use for the entire corporation. For example, Mercedes U.S. in New Jersey produces printed and online promotional materials, where Mercedes dealerships do not. Those who do their research, however, would discover that most of that material is produced by in-house photographers, rather than by freelance photographers. This should be noted in the database. The design firms or advertising agency entries should also list those company's

main accounts. Those main accounts should be closely related to the student's portfolio specialty. The prominent photographers listed are either the photographers the student would like to assist for, or are the photographers who are currently servicing the accounts the student aspires to work on, or both. In addition to the cooperative database contact information, the students would need to do more in depth research on their entries for that information to be of any real marketing value. Students should be prepared to answer more in depth questions in the class discussion about the companies they entered. This detailed information will aid students in determining what competitive advantage can be gained. For a complete list of Cooperative Database Research Questions, see Appendix D.

Finding resources in order to gather research information is often a stumbling block for many students. In an effort to demonstrate that in a competitive enterprise there is often a cooperative effort, it is the intention of this author to locate the cooperative database in a WIKI space that would give access to all students, past and present. In this free community web space, students will be encouraged to share research resources and experiences in competing for potential clients.

Just as the internet is a tool providing access and delivery of information to students, it is also a tool for potential customers to gain access to a business. The importance of "Access and Delivery" and the competitive advantage that can be gained by effectively providing it is presented in Lesson Four.

**Lesson Three Plan Outline:  
Title: Appraise the Competition/Evaluate the Market**

**Lesson Plan Overview:** After one has objectively determined his/her strengths (and weaknesses), he/she can research the competition and the commercial market place to see where those attributes can be best applied. Specific empirical information has to be gathered; assumptions about competitors or the potential market will only lead to disappointment. Much of that information will then be shared in the form of a cooperative database. The database will be accessible to all students, past and present, from a free WIKI space. As the database grows, it will be come of greater value to all. In this free community web space, students will be encouraged to share research resources and experiences in competing for potential clients. Much of the lesson will be in the form of a group discussion, where students share the specific research information they gathered, and the group, lead by the facilitator, discusses where that individual's best competitive advantage may be.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Key Points</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Professional Market Relevance	<p>For a service to be viable, research has to determine if there is a commercial market need. This need has to be established with prior to entering the market.</p> <p>There has to be a differentiation between what a new business can offer and what and existing businesses already offer.</p>	<p>Ask the questions: What can my business offer that the others cannot? What is my niche?</p> <p>Where do I have a competitive advantage over more established business. What am I doing to accentuate that difference.</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>Students have to understand that research is key to a successful business plan. Students need to be able to gather information and then act on that information. As in lesson two, students also need to be able to accurately appraise and emphasize their particular strengths as it relates to the competition</p>	<p>A major obstacle for students in gathering information is that most students are not willing to compile more information than is available on the internet. The most effective way to find out something is to pick up the phone and ask. It is easy to ignore an email, it is harder to ignore a voice.</p>
Recourses, Materials, Lectures, and Guest Speakers	<p>The WIKI space is introduced as the main resource for this lesson. It will be the access point for the existing database and for sharing resources. The instructor will post some preliminary research resources and techniques on the space. Students will be asked to post research resources there as they find them.</p> <p>The lecture in this lesson will be a round robin discussion about the students research findings. The students should be prepared to respond to the Cooperative Database Research Questions in Appendix D. The group will discuss possible competitive strategies based on that</p>	<p><b>Discussion topics:</b> Where does one go to find out information on a company? What is the difference between a contact, a lead, and a prospect?</p> <p>Work backwards; based on where do you want to live, what businesses are there, what do they produce, who produces it?</p> <p>Work backwards; based on what you want to shoot. Where is that type work produced, who is it being produced for, who is producing it.</p>

	information.	Part of the activity is researching alumni and the competition, considered working or interning for them.
Activities and Exercises	Students are required to choose a city and add to a cooperative database in the following areas: (a) Four client direct contacts, (b) two design firms or advertising agencies and their main accounts, (c) two of the prominent photographers serving these potential clients, and (d) one or two photography alumni located in that city. Students will need to do more in depth research on their entries. Students should be prepared to answers more in depth questions in the class discussion about the companies they entered.	Gathering information is only the beginning of turning a contact into a prospect. A systematic approach to communication and follow up is required.  Knowing specific information about one's contracts makes communication more valuable. For example, "Are you still working on the such an such account? I really thought that last so and so was very effective." Everyone likes talking about themselves; know something about your potential client before you make contact. Research is how this is accomplished.
Post Assessment and Evaluation	The initial evaluation is based on how thorough and complete the database entries are.  The remainder of the evaluation is based on the preparedness of the students to discuss their contacts and their particular competitive strategies based on the information they gathered.	Research should yield answers to most of these questions. Some of the discussion topics will be in Cooperative Database Research Questions in Appendix D. <b>Some other Research questions:</b> How did you pick your city and find your contacts? Did you actually speak with anyone there? How did you find out what they produce, do you get any samples? <b>(Client Direct)</b> Do you know who is specifically in charge contracting the services you provide? Is there more than one person, (internal) a staff person and (external) design firm they use? How much money do they actually spend each year on what you do?
Time Schedules	Initial Lecture 60 minutes Database entries assignment due two weeks after lecture Research results and discussion 90 minutes	



## Lesson Four

### *Access and Delivery*

The new generation of consumers are used to immediate gratification (Twenge, 2006). If the immediate gratification requirements of those potential customers are not met, they will potentially go elsewhere. Often the one who wins the competition for clients is simply the one who can provide those clients with easy and immediate access to a companies goods and services. This coupled with prompt response and the delivery of products can often tilt the competitive advantage. Consider the question, does McDonalds really have better hamburgers than anyone else, or are they just more accessible with prompter delivery? Providing a technology based infrastructure rather than a brick and mortar one may be a competitive advantage for a new business entering the market place. A fully developed web presence rather than a retail space is less expensive, more interactive, and can provide potential customers more 24-hour information about a company than a storefront window display. Through this lesson, students explore alternative business structures that allow for greater customer accessibility at a reduced cost compared to a traditional studio setting.

### *Learning Objectives*

In this lesson and activity, students should understand that providing effective access and delivery communicates an eagerness to work and overall professionalism. The best way to market any service is through referral and endorsement by satisfied customers. Prompt response to inquiries and concerns is key in maintaining that satisfaction. Conversely, a slow response communicates that the business either does care about the inquiry or is inexperienced and is unsure how to respond.

### *Activity*

In a small operation, it is virtually impossible to communicate with every inquiry as personally, promptly or comprehensively as one would like. Some of this burden can be carried by technology. Students in this activity are required to produce one comprehensive digital brochure of any of the services their company provides. Service areas that may be considered for digital brochure development are commercial headshots (executives portraits), event photography, table top product illustration, and team sports photography, which has been used as an example (see Appendix E, Digital Brochure). These services should be considered routine by the company and not something that requires a special quote. A properly sized and formatted digital brochure should be able to be emailed or downloaded on demand by potential customers from the company web site. (In discussion topics, concerns about download on demand will be discussed.) It should also contain price information as well as samples from other similar jobs. The purpose of this digital brochure is two fold: a) it would provide a visual reference for the customer while the assignment is being discussed, and b) it frees the service provider from having to stop and prepare a specific quote and gather samples for each potential job, which could cause a delay. This digital brochure provides a prompt comprehensive response to a potential customer inquiry. A prepared digital brochure of a specific service also demonstrates a company's experience in the area of the assignment requested and instills confidence in the potential customer by demonstrating that experience. The more specific digital brochures a company can develop, for the various services offered, the better. This is not an all inclusive brochure or menu of all the companies services; that would be counterproductive, and it is addressed in the discussion topics for Lesson Four.

**Lesson Four Plan Outline:  
Title: Access and Delivery**

**Lesson Plan Overview:** Quite often, the company that wins the competition for potential customers is the company with the easiest access to the customer. In this lesson, students will learn the advantages of prompt communication and streamlining the estimation process. In the activity, the students will develop a digital brochure to provide easy, comprehensive access to potential customers in one service area. This provides efficiency for the company and instills confidence in the consumer. This digital brochure demonstrates experience in the service area requested by providing specific samples and a well thought out price structure. Where a delay in a quote may leave some doubt as to a company’s expertise in a certain area, instant access to information provides confidence to the potential client by demonstrating a company’s prior experience.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Key Points</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Professional Market Relevance	<p>Convenient access and delivery (as illustrated by fast food drive through windows) is often a determining factor in being ask to provide a bid and being awarded a job.</p> <p>A vendor, supplying a reoccurring service, should be aware of what it takes to provide that service and make a profit. That information along with sample should always available to the potential customer.</p>	<p>In a digital brochure, if a customer could view assignments, complete with prices, similar to the one they are requesting,</p> <p>Would that instill confidence?</p> <p>Would that minimize miscommunication?</p> <p>Would better communication ultimately promote customer satisfaction?</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>Students through this lesson and activity should understand that providing effective access and delivery communicates an eagerness to work and overall professionalism. The best way to market any service is through referrals and endorsements by satisfied customers. Prompt response to inquiries and concerns is key in maintaining that satisfaction. Conversely, a slow response communicates that the business either does care about the inquiry or is inexperienced and is unsure how to respond.</p>	<p>Ironically, digital brochures demonstrate experience but they can also hide a deficit. If a service provider does not have a great deal of experience in an service area, the illusion of experience can be projected by such a digital brochure promotional piece. The Digital Brochure in Appendix E is an example exactly that. It was designed to promote a new service based on what was new digital technology at the time.</p> <p><b>Discussion topic:</b> Would a catch all brochure be less effective than individual brochures addressing specific services? Think of your own vendor searches are you more confident when you find companies that specialize in exactly what you are looking for, or companies that do everything. Specific digital brochures give the impression of specialization.</p>

<p>Recourses, Materials, Lectures, and Guest Speakers</p>	<p>The lesson will include samples and discussion of both web sites that provide comprehensive sample and price information and those that do not.</p> <p>The lecture provides a list of vendor services and procedures that will expedite the delivery process from online storefronts to delivery finishing software.</p> <p>Demonstrations of photography suppliers such as Pictage, Mckennapro and automated web programs, and FTP downloads practices for proofing should be included.</p>	<p><b>Discussion topics:</b> The debate among sales people, if too much access and upfront information are provided, such as download on demand digital brochures, is personal interaction discouraged, because potential clients do not have to contact the service provider directly for price and other information?</p> <p><b>Questions:</b> In a small business, with a limited number of employees, is it better to encourage interaction by withholding information or is better for potential customers to vet themselves by providing as much information as possible? If a company is providing comprehensive information and another is not, would you, as a consumer, wait for information from the company which does not instantly provide it? Is transparency important?</p>
<p>Activities and Exercises</p>	<p>Students in this activity are required to produce one comprehensive digital brochure of service their company provides (see Appendix E Digital Brochure). This service should be considered routine by the company and not something that requires a special quote. The digital brochure should be able to be emailed or downloaded on demand by potential customers from the company web site. It should also contain all relevant price information as well as samples from other similar jobs</p>	<p>Technical specifications: The digital brochure should be produced in a universally accessible non-proprietary format and should be small enough to be emailed or downloaded quickly; for example, PDF or JPG, web formatted, not to exceed 200k. All pictures should be copyright identifiable on the image, as well as meta data embedded.</p>
<p>Post Assessment and Evaluation</p>	<p>The digital brochure will be projected and evaluated in the form of a class critique. The digital brochure assignment will be critiqued in the following areas: Professional appearance, quality of the samples, graphic design, technical size, and format requirements, and the content (including services provided, prices and contact information).</p> <p>The other area of assessment and a topic for group discussion, are the services described in the brochure financially and logistically realistic.</p>	<p>The evaluation of the digital promotional piece should revolve around one critique question: Competitively, does this brochure make it more likely, or less likely, that someone would use this vendor's services?</p> <p>Where a well designed, attractive, professional looking brochure devoid of errors can enhance a companies image, a poorly executed brochure can do the exact opposite.</p>
<p>Time Schedules</p>	<p>Initial Lecture 60 minutes Digital brochure assignment due two weeks after lecture Evaluation and discussion 90 minutes</p>	

## Chapter Summary

The Competition Module identifies four market principles and requires students to consider those principles while participating in the competitive activities in the module. It is essential to establish the benefits of competition in order for the students to engage in the curriculum. Therefore, all the activities and discussion topics in the module are designed to have practical applications and relevance to the commercial marketplace. The contribution of this project, its limitations, peer assessment, and recommendations for further development are discussed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to write a module for insertion in the Small Business Management curriculum that addresses the need for students to compete in order to achieve personal and professional goals. The lessons in the module are based on principles that support the practical need of competition in the commercial marketplace. In this chapter, the author speaks to the intent of the module; that the lessons not only have a practical applications but also may also positively influence students' opinions regarding competition. The limitations of this project, peer assessment, and recommendations for further development are also discussed in this chapter.

#### Contribution of Project

The module lessons established that, in true competition, even if one does not prevail, one can gain benefits through the information gathered and the character developed in the struggle. As importantly, the activities in the module, which are cooperative and independent in nature, demonstrated that cooperation and competition often do coexist. Finally, perhaps because of the culture in primary and secondary education, fighting (as expressed by a student) and competition are often confused. One of the purposes of this module was to define those differences; in fighting, the goal is to defeat the opponent by whatever means. The purpose of competition is to achieve personal goals, regardless of the opponent. Where fighting may fit neatly into notion of “mutually exclusive goal attainment,” it is not a necessary component of competition.

## Limitations

Ultimately, the long-term success of this curriculum can only be measured objectively by tracking students after graduation. Although, the professional college has some baseline data in this area that would allow one to compare pre-competition module students with post-competition module students, the results of such a comparison would in all likelihood be inconclusive. The data available on students' success is only tracked for a 6 month period after graduation. That time span is not long enough to determine the results of any business plan. Therefore, it should be understood that obtaining empirical data to support the effectiveness of the competition module is beyond the limitations of this project. As with all educational programs, it is much more difficult to evaluate a student who has been taught how to think, rather than a student who has just been taught the answers.

## Peer Assessment Results

Three faculty members assessed the competition module. One assessor was the department director; the other two assessors were faculty members who participate in teaching the other career development courses in the department. The evaluators have a combined educational experience of over 50 years and over 75 years experience as professional photographers. The assessors unanimously believed that there is a need to prepare students for the competition they will face when they enter the commercial marketplace. They concurred that these lessons could be effective to that end. They also determined that it was a good idea to establish market principles as the basis for the competition lessons in order to gain the students' support. Specifically, in Lesson Two, "*Presentation Skills*," the suggestion was made that students be restricted to the same

type of product presentation. So as one assessor stated, “You are comparing apples to apples.” Students therefore will be restricted to service industry presentations, rather than products. One faculty member, although validating the premise of the module, asked, “How does the instructor help the student move beyond hurt feelings?” This author does not deny that “hurt feelings” is a distinct possibility and potentially is part of the anticipated effect of the module. One cannot develop resilience if there is no antagonist. Should one be excused from taking a beneficial medicine if one does not like the taste? Hopefully the insight gained and the other benefits of competition, which should be continually emphasized, mitigate any negative feelings.

#### Recommendations for Further Development

Although professional relevance has been an important feature of this module, it could be more pivotal. More guest lecturers and field trips should be scheduled to successful establishments, where the principles described in the lessons are in practice. The continued use of technology as a competitive advantage for the new professional needs to be stressed more in the curriculum. The cooperative data base is a first step; it is the hope that the students themselves will discover new and better business technologies and share them with each other on the WIKI space. The ubiquitous use of technology is so commonplace for the next generation of professionals, it is doubtful they realize just what a competitive advantage its full implementation could be in their businesses. Finally, nothing says real market relevance like real money. These students are completely capable of shooting photographic assignments now. There is no need to wait for graduation. Most of the students, however, do not truly consider themselves professional photographers. This is a major disadvantage when competing against less



educated, less versatile photographers in the commercial marketplace that do consider themselves professional. Students need to be encouraged in this class to establish businesses, compete for photographic assignments, take orders, and sell products, while they are in school. That, in this authors opinion, would have a profound effect. A taste of commerce would tip the scales and make desire to compete for market share much more pressing.

### Project Summary

The purpose of this project was to introduce a curriculum that would encourage students to compete with one another in preparation for entering a competitive commercial marketplace. This curriculum promotes business principles that illustrate the benefits of competing in the marketplace. The activities in these lessons demonstrate, a) when true competition exists, all parties ultimately benefit, and b) competition, contrary to what the students may have been taught, is nothing to be feared. After witnessing students resistance to healthy competition, and therefore determining a need, the author drew upon his 25 years experience as a self employed professional photographer and 15 years as adjunct faculty member, to develop this project.

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APPENDIX A

Portfolio Evaluation Form

**Portfolio Evaluation Form**  
Presenter

Small Business Management  
Date

Evaluator:

**Rate each of the following categories, 5 being high score 1 being low. Please comment at the end**

**Technical Execution**

Appropriate Focus	1	2	3	4	5
Color or Contrast	1	2	3	4	5
Exposure /+ - Detail	1	2	3	4	5

**Creative**

Composition	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate Color Palette	1	2	3	4	5
Intellectually Exciting	1	2	3	4	5
Emotionally Compelling	1	2	3	4	5

**Body of Work**

Continuity of Style	1	2	3	4	5
Continuity of Subject	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate Image Order	1	2	3	4	5

**Animated Versions**

Image Movement	1	2	3	4	5
Image Transitions	1	2	3	4	5
Audio Track	1	2	3	4	5

**Questions**

Was the animated version better	0N	3Y
If so, was the difference substantial	0N	3Y

Comments:

**Total Points**

APPENDIX B

Presentation Skills Evaluation Form

**Presentation Skills Evaluation Form**

Presenter:

**Small Business Management**

Date

Evaluator:

**Rate each of the following categories, 5 being high score 1 being low. Please comment at the end**

**Professional Appearance**

Personal appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Body Language (confident?)	1	2	3	4	5
Eye Contact	1	2	3	4	5

**Speaking Skills**

Volume	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity/ Logical / Organized	1	2	3	4	5
Cadence	1	2	3	4	5
Spontaneity /Humor/ Interactive	1	2	3	4	5

**Visual Aids**

Functioning AV /Sound	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive/ Professional Looking	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	1	2	3	4	5

**Preparedness**

Knowledge of Subject	1	2	3	4	5
Answered Question Well	1	2	3	4	5
Anticipated Objections	1	2	3	4	5

**Supplemental Items**

Leave Behind Piece	0N	3Y
Interactive Activity	0N	3Y

Comments:

**Total Points**

## APPENDIX C

### Cooperative Database Fields



### Cooperative Database Fields

Date Entered	Contact Person (greeting)	Clients or Major Accounts
Date Updated	Last	Years in Business
Company	First	Gross Billing
Type of Business	Title or Position	Money on photo annually
Address	Phone	Type of Work produced
City	Cell Phone	Education or Awards
State	Email	Equipment used or required
Zip	# of Employees	Agency or Design Firm Used
Web Site	In House Photographers	Research Entered by:

## APPENDIX D

### Cooperative Database Research Questions

## Contact Data Research Questions

In addition to basic contact information being added to a database, questions need to ask in order to make any presentation or competition more effective. Potential clients are far more interested in themselves than they are in a potential vendor. Any interest that the contact may have in a potential vendor stems from what that vendor can do to aid the contact's business. The more one knows about a contact, the more likely they are to become a prospect and a client. The more one knows about the competition the better chance one has of effectively competing. Students need to be made aware that; the answers to these questions will not be available without some personal interaction. The answers probably will not be available on a web site. They may not even be available from the source directly. They also may not be available in the first conversation with the first contact but the answers to questions like these are still the objective.

### **Potential Client Questions:**

1. What promotional material do they produce? Can you get some samples?
2. What is the company past, how did it start, is it growing? Where does the management see its future market growth?
3. What is your contacts background? How did he or she enter the company? Where do they see themselves in future?
4. What does the company like best about the vendors they are currently using? Where could there be improvement?
5. Who is specifically in charge contracting the services you provide? Are there more than one person, (internal) a staff person, and (external) a design firm they use?
6. What was the biggest project or the most successful or impressive project they have done? What was its the budget? What made it special?
7. How much money do they actually spend each year on what you do? (People are actually usually willing to speak about money that's not their own)

8. What can I do, as a vendor, to make you more successful, what do you need?

All lot of information may seem like background, and it is. One major advantage current vendors have, that new vendors do not, is history. The more information one can gather, the quicker a rapport will be established.

9. Who else do you know in the field that you would recommend that I speak with? (Always try to get another lead)

**Potential Competition Questions:**

10. What is the company past, how did the company start, is it growing? Where does the owner see its future market growth?
11. What is your competitions background, education, and training who did they work for? (If you want to get where someone is, find out how they got there.)
12. Who are your competitors' current clients? How long have they had them? How did they get them?
13. What work do they produce for their clients? Can you get some samples?
14. What was the biggest project or impressive project your competitor has worked on thus far? What was its the budget?
15. What is the most rewarding/satisfying project they worked on, why?
16. What is your competitor's web presence like? How do they go about acquiring new customers and maintaining contact with the old ones?
17. What kind of equipment and delivery system does your competitor use? Is there room for improvement?
18. What is your competitors' presentation like? Personally and professionally is there room in that area for separation (age, style)?
19. Has the your competition worked with new photographers before, are there assistant or employment opportunities?

APPENDIX E

Digital Brochure

## Sample Digital Brochure

This brochure was developed to be delivered a PDF and as a printed piece. Similar information was also available on the web site.

**Party Crashers Sports Photography**

**Party Crashers PHOTOGRAPHY**

Online Proofing  
Team Pictures  
Individuals  
Live Action

**2001 MARLINS**

**Ranch Baseball**

**Golden Eagles 2001**

**303-741-9966**  
**www.partycrashers.net**

**Sports and Activities**  
Full action photographs that only a professionally trained and equipped photographer can deliver.

**Team & Individual Coverage**  
We can take a team picture and create a composite photograph combined with the individual picture or provide individual pictures only.  
This requires participation by the entire roster, 10 person minimum. If less than 10 people on roster, please add an additional \$25.00 sitting fee.  
Group and individual pictures should be taken at a practice with kids in full uniform, preferably late afternoon.  
Individual pictures can be posed or action. We will choose the best picture for your package.  
Initial purchase/payment is due the day of event.

**Packages:**  
Basic: \$15.00 per person.  
1- 5x7 group photo with graphics, 1 - 3.5x5 individual photo.  
Composite: \$25.00 per person.  
Individual and group photo composite, your choice of sheet styles.

**Live Coverage**  
Free game day or event coverage for teams or organizations with a minimum of \$200.00 in sales at the time of the initial shoot. Or, a \$50.00 photography fee will be charged to organizations with less than a \$200.00 minimum. We will photograph a portion of a sporting or performance event with the emphasis on the participants. If game is rained or snowed out, all attempt will be made to reschedule shoot. Party Crashers cannot guarantee every player or performer will be photographed during coverage.

**Package:**  
Pick-Three-Combo: 2 sheets for \$50.00 (Includes all computer work)  
We can combine three of your favorite pictures to make a single more impressive picture. We can add graphics, team name or logos for a finished professional look. Your choice of sheet styles.

**Large Group Coverage**  
\$300.00 photographic fee for clubs and organizations with 30 or more members. This includes shooting a large group photo as well as individual posed or action shots. Organizations will receive a 20% commission on all orders received from initial shoot until the \$300.00 fee has been repaid. After the \$300.00 has been repaid, the commission will drop to 10% of order balance.

**Packages:**  
Basic: \$15.00 per person.  
1 - 5x7 group photo with graphics, 1 - 3.5x5 individual photo.

**Sheet Styles:**  
A: 1 - 8x10 B: 2 - 5x7s C: 1 - 5x7, 1 - 3.5x5 and 2 billfolds D: 2 - 4x6s and 3 billfolds E: 3 - 4x6s F: 1 - 5x7 and 2 - 3x5s.

Additional sheets of the same image available for \$20.00 each.  
Photos from events with 10 or more participants will be posted to the web for free.  
All orders will be delivered to one individual for final distribution.

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www.partycrashers.net

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