The Essential Guide to Understanding Your Marketing Degree
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Executive Summary

As students, we understand how difficult it can be to imagine what a long term career will look like. But do not worry! If marketing is your focus, we have complied helpful information to help you get started on the right track. It is crucial to start taking the right steps early in college to prepare yourself for your future career. Marketing is a career that has a substantial growth rate and constant technology changes, which brings new opportunities for students interested in this career path.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which analyzes and disseminates information about labor market activity, states that in 2015, the median pay for marketing managers was $124,850 with a growth rate of 9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This is an exciting prospect if this is your career path. Even though these upper management positions come with time and experience, we know that students with high goals can eventually obtain these types of management positions if properly prepared.

We will be discussing the preliminary steps you can take to build a foundation for a successful career in marketing. We will cover which classes to take, which clubs to join, what other activities can help bring success in the industry, and finally, what types of marketing careers are available. Our goal is to help students visualize a path that is obtainable through hard work and dedication.
Mandy's Story

Let’s face it, choosing a career is a difficult decision to make. This goes out to anyone who may have doubts about their chosen career path or those who have yet to make a decision. And since you’re reading this, marketing may be a career path you may want to take. Not knowing much about this major may be intimidating, but here are some things to keep in mind when going into the marketing field. Although my experience does not speak for everyone in the field, these are some advices I would pass on to anyone going into the marketing field; student to student.

My Story

My name is Mandy and I am a junior at Cal State Los Angeles majoring in Business Administration with an option in Finance and Marketing. Before coming into college, I knew I wanted to be in the business field but had no idea which sector would be the best fit for me. I was known to be creative in high school and gravitated towards the idea of combining both creativity and business. However, after taking two marketing classes, I realized I was not the same person I had been coming into college; and that included career goals.

During my sophomore and junior year, I took some finance classes and fell in love with the challenge of crunching numbers which ultimately lead me to major in both finance and marketing. It has taken me a few years to finalize my major after trial and error, which is perfectly fine.

No one really has experience in a major they might be interested in when coming into college, which is why reflecting on every class you take is important when narrowing down on a major.

My Future

During this summer I will be interning for Nordstrom in their Retail Management Program. Although this does not pertain to finance or marketing, I am reminded of how a degree is not limited to just one sector and the beauty of interning for a bigger company is the ability to work your way into the department you may want. I eventually want to work my way up into their corporate office in either their marketing or finance department.

NORDSTROM

Interning for a marketing company or any may be great to get a gist of marketing and what it entails as well as getting your foot through the door. Another route would be to work or intern for a company that has a marketing department so that you can eventually work your way to your desired position.

Therefore, my final advice to you is to learn the different sectors of marketing and decide which path you would want to take, then work towards that. The section on the different marketing sectors will be further explained.
This era was recently put into the limelight with the show Mad Men. This involved strategic planning, and management to determine costs, and communication formats.

In the late 1990s with the advent of the internet, new forms of marketing were developed. Examples include, emails, social media, and blogs. These technologies have drastically changed the course of marketing. Today, billions of dollars are used to persuade consumers into purchasing different products and services (The Evolution of Marketing, 2016).

Future

Who knows what the next big shakeup will be, but what we do know is that marketing is not going anywhere anytime soon. You can be a part of that next wave of marketing professionals that help develop various forms of promotional materials for a business or a marketing analyst that helps a business analyze its consumers.

Origin

In its earliest form, marketing started as simply trying to sell goods and services. Modern marketing did not begin until the time of the industrial revolution. With the massive change in social life the needs of consumers changed. The mass production of items required producers to find new ways to inform their customers.

By the late 1940s it was essential to use marketing to ward off increased competition. This involved building brand value, distribution channels, and customer communication (The Evolution of Marketing, 2016).

During the 1960s the fierce competition in various industries resulted in specialist attention to develop business success. This new era resulted in entire companies rising to solely market other companies products.

What is Marketing?

“Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”

(American Marketing Association, 2013)

That is what marketing is today but marketing has come a long way from where it started and in many ways will continue to evolve with the trends in society.

"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”

(American Marketing Association, 2013)
Academic Steps

What to do academically?

If a career in marketing sounds interesting to you then let us describe what the marketing department at Cal State LA can offer you. The college of Business and Economics offers three different options in the marketing department as well as different minors and certificates. As a student in the marketing department you will take similar courses to other business students but will also need to take specific marketing courses based on the option that you select. We will discuss the core classes you must take and the different major options that you have. Cal State L.A. also has many different business clubs that can be very beneficial to marketing students.

Core Classes

The three options offered for marketing include: Marketing, International Business, and Retailing. However, you do not have to choose an option right away if you are still in the process of deciding. Your decision should be finalized in your junior year as most students will be taking classes focused in their option.

The three options require the same core classes and are similar across all business majors, which is helpful if you are undecided or decide to switch majors. All three options require 72 semester units of business and economics classes, which does include the general education requirement.

It is recommended that students complete the first 45 units before starting the courses required for their option. These 45 units are the core classes required for all business students who seek to obtain a Bachelor’s of Science in Business Administration. The other 27 units will be different based on the classes required for the different options. (CSULA Department of Marketing).

Minors

The marketing department at Cal State LA also offers 4 different minors for all students. The minors are: Entertainment Marketing, Social Media, General Marketing, and Sustainability Marketing. Any student can choose to complete any of the minors but keep in mind that you must finish your major and minor in the same semester. All 4 minors require a different number of units ranging from 15 to 21 units (CSULA Department of Marketing).
Clubs

The College of Business and Economics has a variety of clubs pertaining to professional development. Although only one club is specific to marketing, all clubs would be beneficial for students looking to improve their skills in various areas. Although at times it may seem difficult to make time for extracurriculars, it is a smart investment of your time to learn more about marketing as well as staying engaged. Often times, lack of motivation may be due to lack of involvement. Clubs help expand your network by helping you meet other students, professors, and business professionals. The volunteer events and leadership opportunities will also help you develop your skills and build your resume.

We will focus on the five business organizations on campus that we believe are the most beneficial to a marketing student. It is also important to remember that there are a variety of other organizations at Cal State LA and marketing students shouldn’t limit themselves to the clubs we focus on.

Hispanic Business Society

The first club is the Hispanic Business Society. This is the largest business club on campus. It takes business students of all majors and ethnicities. This club focuses on helping students become better leader and also offers many social events so that students can expand their network (College: Student Clubs). We suggest that students join this club by their second year if they will be at Cal State LA for 4 years or join the year that they transfer in from a different college.

ALPFA

Another club to consider joining is Association of Latino Professionals For America. ALPFA is a national Latino organization that focuses on empowering business students. This club helps develop students into business professionals. They have many networking events and also invite a variety of guest speakers (College: Student Clubs). Once again, all business majors can join this organization.

Marketing Club

There is also the Marketing Club at Cal State LA. It is not as large as the clubs previously mentioned but this should not deter you from joining. This club focuses on preparing students for a career in marketing as it continues to evolve rapidly. This club will also give you the opportunity to meet other marketing students and network with professionals in the marketing sector (College: Student Clubs).
Another organization to consider joining is the Accounting Society. Although it is an accounting club, all business majors can join. The focus of this club is helping students develop the skills they will need for the career path that they have chosen. As a marketing major it may be difficult to understand how an accounting club is useful.

However, if you decide to become a marketing analyst it is important to know how to work with data, which is a skill the accounting club can help improve. The Accounting Society also hosts various networking events with professors and accounting professionals (College: Student Clubs).

Last but not least, Professionals in Human Resources Association, or PIHRA, is another great organization to join. This organization provides students the opportunity to enhance their skills, networking opportunities, and career opportunities in human resources and other business professions (College: Student Clubs).

Once again, joining a club will make your experience at Cal State LA more enjoyable and will help develop skills needed to excel in the workforce. Students should seriously consider joining an organization by their 3rd year or the 1st year that they transfer in.
Supplementary Skills

So, you have the desire to work in marketing, you have the classes, and you have the extracurricular activities. What else can you do to get that competitive edge employers seek? Many marketing consultants have a wide variety of technical and graphic skills on their resumes besides the academic knowledge and work experience.

It may sound like a lot to ask of just one person but when you get down to it all of these skills complement and benefit one another nicely. You may consider taking on programming and coding, analysis of big data, and creative tasks such graphic design, photography, website development, or animation.

You don’t need to master all of these skills, but having one or two of these will definitely help you stand out from the competition. Let’s take a look at all of these individually and how they impact marketing.

Programming/Coding

I know what you’re thinking, you chose marketing so that you wouldn’t have to deal with math, or computer science jargon that already rattles your mind; but it can be useful in more ways than one. No one is asking that you become an expert coder but knowing some of the foundations to coding can have a big impact on how you think. Programming can be used to add important functionality and specialty options to web sites, blogs, or portfolios.

This ability will also help apply programming practices and ideas to your critical thinking process. One such valuable technique would be making a program to handle routine tasks that can eat up your time and allow you focus on the more creative problems. Most importantly, understanding the technology behind these machines can have a great impact in everyday life and how you think (Benefits of Learning Code, n.d.). Of course, since you’re not a computer science major you might have a hard time knowing where to start without sinking too much time on such a complicated endeavor.

Luckily there are many resources out there that can help you learn the basics. One great option available to all students here at Cal State LA is complementary access to www.lynda.com an online education platform. With this access you can find thousands of videos on any subject taught by industry experts so you won’t wasting your time finding dead-end tutorials somewhere else. You can find this in your QuickLaunch sidebar when you log in to the Cal State LA student portal.

Analysis

Another technical skill that will work wonders to your resume is knowing how to analyze big data. This area has grown a lot over the years and will no doubt continue on its trajectory as a critical component to most business. What is big data and why is it important? The concept is simple. Analyze large amounts of data to discover patterns, correlations, and hidden insights (Big Data Analytics, n.d.).
This is very critical to marketers as it helps show data trends and allows you to jump ahead of those trends and catch the next big hit. This may sound very technical and daunting but it is actually quite straightforward. For the most part, the skills you need are minimal since most software packages do all the heavy lifting. Your part comes from gathering the data and most importantly knowing how to analyze what you find and how to present it to key people. Adding this hard skill will help you stand out as a candidate as someone that can provide intelligent business solutions compared to more traditional marketing graduates.

**Graphics Design**

The next set of skills you should consider learning are the most applicable and direct to benefit from as a marketing student. It goes without saying that the visuals are a critical component of any marketing campaign.

You may have great ideas but not being able to execute them might put you at a disadvantage when others can. Graphic design does not mean you have to be artistic, but it doesn’t hurt either. Being a graphic designer means being able to synthesize the many elements of visual clarity to communicate your message effectively.

This can take many approaches. You can learn the principles behind the practice and combine it with the essentials of any graphic editing program such as Adobe suite, which will add to the growing arsenal of tools under your belt. This skill can be used for various projects such as posters, flyers, brochures, and magazines to even more advanced visual media, such as motion graphics or web technologies. This knowledge can open the path to many possible jobs that support marketing teams. These can range from specialist titles such as User-Interface designer or graphic artist to senior designer or creative director that manage whole departments, (Cezzar, 2015).

**Web Design**

Web design skills are a combination of graphic design ideas and technical knowledge. Although you can make a website already half built from templates and services like squarespace.com, it is more useful to know the ins and outs of actually building one from scratch. Not only will this benefit any clients you will work with, this skill also releases any limitations when making your own.

Having your own website is not only a necessity for businesses today but as an individual it can help when searching for internships or employment but also show off your work. You may end up starting a job with a limited team that has little to no skills in website design and being the person who can contribute will certainly off pay handsomely.
Photography

Now let’s say you know the principles behind graphic design, and the basics of website code, the last piece of the puzzle will be the content. A major part of the content comes from images and pictures. As we know, a picture is worth a thousand words and finding that picture is sometimes easier said than done. Therefore, creating these assets for your projects is not only suggested but recommended over using stock images anyone can find online.

Having an Instagram account does not automatically make you a photographer. Using social media is important, as it is the new wave in marketing strategies. Knowing how to take great pictures is both the art of capturing the moment but also the details of getting the moment you seek, (Draper, 2013). Since the camera is just a tool it is up to you to learn how to be a proficient storyteller and mastering that tool is much more than just pressing a button.

It can be as easy as taking a class at a community college where you can learn the complete functionality of a camera. This includes knowing about aperture, lighting, size of the lens, etc., knowing these secrets can make regular photographers look like total professionals, as even the vocabulary can separate you from literally the millions of people who take pictures.

Animation/Motion Graphics

This last skill is more involved and maybe considered more niche but knowing some animation can only help punch up your graphics significantly. This particular skill requires some level of interest in motion graphics, as both creative and technical knowledge is necessary (along with patience!). What is important to single out from adding animation to your content is that is can help keep viewers attention and make complex subjects more engaging, (Bedrina, 2016).

Animation is not just bringing characters to life it can include 2D motion of any kind for a number of interactive projects. Various prominent marketing companies recognize it as an increasing trend for marketing needs, (Bedrina, 2016). Not only will these animated videos add high production values to your message but also in our new media saturated world will help keep distracted users entertained.

All these skills put together will add incredible value to your work and competitive profile, and serve as a bridge to other potential fields of interest.
There are many different types of marketing strategies available. Each marketing strategy is useful towards defining and targeting a specific audience. These different types include: digital marketing, event marketing and environmental marketing. This section will further explain each marketing method.

**Digital Marketing**

Digital marketing is the use of digital technologies, which include the Internet, mobile devices, and other digital advertising strategies, such as social media, email, and websites in order to promote one's business or products. With more individuals using digital outlets in their daily lives, the opportunity to attract attention towards products continues to rise.

Digital marketing is important because it has grown more popular within our society and has become more preferred compared to traditional marketing. According to Gartner’s Digital Marketing Spend Report (2013), “40% of [companies] claimed having considerable savings by using digital marketing methods of promotion for their product and services.” This demonstrates that digital marketing has become more cost-effective compared to traditional marketing. With the shift in cost, many companies may decide to also make the switch towards using digital marketing.

**Social Media Marketing**

There are many different forms of digital marketing, some of these include social media marketing, email marketing and pay-per-click marketing. Social media marketing has been a very popular and a powerful aspect of advertising in the past years. Social media marketing is the idea of creating and gaining a flow of traffic on a business's site by consumers. This flow of traffic has many benefits and provides consumers with the services they need, while also providing the business with the necessary revenue they need to continue functioning. Social media platforms have revolutionized marketing, offering new ways to reach, inform, engage, sell to, learn about, and provide service to customers” (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016).

**Email Marketing**

Email marketing has also been an effective tool in the current digital marketing era. According to Dapko and Artis (2014), the use of e-mail as a method of communication is expected to grow given the increased use of technology by young adults (i.e., millennials). The growth of digital marketing is good for individuals looking for positions in the marketing field because they are able to use email marketing to send out resumes to multiple companies using a single outlet. This provides a sense of convenience for the individual looking to market themselves in the industry.

**Pay-per-click**

Lastly, pay-per-click (PPC) marketing is also an aspect of digital marketing that is used to provide traffic to one's website. PPC marketing provides companies with the ability to advertise on other sites while also receiving a portion of funds. This idea of PPC marketing comes into play through sponsored searches. In other words, when individuals use search engines to search for things they find of inter-
est, PPC advertisements are more likely to be found on other websites that they visit. According to researchers, “sponsored search advertising [also known as PPC], has become a successful channel for advertisers as well as a profitable business model for the leading commercial search engines” because it allows for a steady flow for PPC campaign management (King et. al., 2015, p. 4818). Furthermore, this aspect of digital marketing continues to be an important tool because it has proven to be effective and drives the necessary attention towards sites.

**Event Marketing**

Event Marketing can take different shapes. One type of event marketing refers to a company using *marketing techniques to promote a particular event*. An example of a company that does this type of event marketing is AEG Live. AEG promotes live events and famous festivals like Coachella Valley Music Festival. In this type of event marketing, the festival acts as the product that must be marketed. Target audience, price, ticket distribution, and promotion channels must be identified. Strategic partnerships and sponsorship are important aspects of the event’s success. Sponsorship allows a company to reach specifically targeted niche markets. In addition, it is a powerful complement to other marketing programs, in addition to having a dramatic influence on customer relations (Friedman, 2013).

A second type of event marketing refers to *using live events to promote a specific product*. Examples of this type of event marketing would be trade shows, seminars, product launch parties, and conferences. “Live events offer a unique opportunity for customers to interact with brands to get a firsthand sense of a company’s focus, perspective, and personality” (Marketo, 2017). Through these interactions, companies can engage, develop, and sustain customer relations in an attempt to build brand equity.

Both of these types of event marketing will continue to gain momentum as marketers seek to make lasting impressions on consumers. “Reaching people isn’t the challenge—it’s connecting with people," says Charlie Horsey of MKTG, a marketing services firm that specializes in event and experiential marketing for companies like Nike and Google. “Tactile engagements where people can feel, touch, taste the product—rather than simply reading about it, deepen and enhance relationships” (Hanlon).

**Environmental Marketing**

As society has become more concerned with protecting the environment, there has been a high demand for environmental marketing. This type of marketing is sometimes also called green marketing or sustainability marketing. Environmental marketing focuses on promoting products that are good for the environment as a marketing strategy. In recent years, environmental marketing has become more popular, however it is not a new concept (O’Reilly).

Professor of Marketing, Dr. Houston joined us for an interview to give you more insight into environmental marketing.
1. What do you think environmental/sustainable marketing is and how do you see the future for it?

Sustainability marketing is a new paradigm of marketing that embraces and integrates the “big picture” perspective of the natural environment into the framework of the marketing environment. Previous marketing frameworks have viewed the natural environment as external to the marketing process.

2. What skills do you think are important to attain in this field?

Interdisciplinary skills are critical for doing well in this field. This perspective requires that students are not only trained in marketing, but also trained in geosciences, systems thinking, sociology, anthropology, biology, and environmental sciences. In this way, they can begin to explore the “big picture” perspective about climate change, the human impact on this mounting 21st century issue, and the importance of transformative thinking to change destructive practices such as mindless consumption.

3. What opportunities are there for students who decide to pursue this path?

There are many, many career opportunities for students who are passionate about making changes on issues surrounding environmental and social justice. To name just a few, they can work at all levels of government or for corporations or non-profit organizations to improve recycling options, promote water conservation, improve public transportation options, develop alternatives to fast fashion, reduce food waste, etc.
A career in marketing has great potential as it has become a necessity for businesses of all kinds. As a student looking into this field, there are various clubs and classes that can aid in your marketing development. Skills that are highly desired in marketing must also be considered to gain a competitive edge. With the help of websites and free resources available, you can attain skills such as programming, design, and photo editing. As students, do take advantage of complimentary services such as Lynda to gain the competitive edge employers are seeking. Finally, we hope that our suggestions has helped you as you take one step closer to your future marketing career. Good luck and always be willing to innovate.

“With marketing having such a positive outlook, it can be a great career opportunity in the business world.”
REFERENCES


