

Running head: A MARKETING GUIDE FOR FRESHMEN

Fort Lewis Marketing Guide for Freshmen

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This guide was designed and written with incoming Fort Lewis College freshmen in mind. It was specifically written for freshmen that are seeking to major in business marketing. After reading this guide you should have a better understanding of what will be expected of you at Fort Lewis College and in your future job setting as marketing major. This paper will discuss technology and writing in marketing as well as what makes a successful marketing major. Throughout this paper you will learn about writing in your profession based on my own experience with technical writing. You will also learn about the professional requirements of a marketer from my interview with a marketing professor here at Fort Lewis College.

Technical Writing in General

You're probably wondering what exactly I mean by "technical" writing. Basically, technical writing is a straightforward, concise way to write in business. *Technical Writing: Process and Product* sums it up nicely by describing technical writing as "[a] communication written for and about business and industry, [in which] the technical writer's goal is to create text that is clear, concise, easy to understand, and easy to navigate" (Gerson & Gerson, 2006, p. 3).

Technical Writing in Marketing

Knowing how to write is of the utmost importance in marketing. In a school as well as a business setting, you're going to use writing on a daily basis. The clarity and strength of your writing will be an important indicator of your talent for marketing. Why? Because marketing is all about conveying messages clearly so you can sell more of a particular product. And, if you choose to focus on advertising you'll want to have a thorough understanding of how to use words and how to influence people using words. This kind of awareness comes partially from understanding the art of technical writing. Furthermore, marketing professors at Fort Lewis

College are exceptionally perceptive. Your technical writing ability will tell your professors whether or not you understand key concepts.

In order to better understand the importance of technical writing in college and the “real world,” I consulted professor William Dodds, a serious academic and an impressive marketing professor. I asked Dr. Dodds a series of questions concerning technical writing, and he had a plethora of useful advice. He described how one should communicate with colleagues in his field, in which he said “when convincing [other marketing practitioners] of an idea I’m putting forth, it’s important not to have any loose ends ... every sentence has a purpose, kind of like building blocks for a larger meaning” (W. Dodds, personal communication, September 21, 2007). He also provided a comedic anecdote concerning marketing students who don’t proofread, stating, “one of the funniest ones is assess (a-s-s-e-s-s)... some people leave off that second s, so it turns into asses... and [I’m thinking] this kind of diminishes the quality of your message” (W. Dodds, personal communication, September 21, 2007). Perhaps now you understand why I stress the importance of word choice and flawlessness when pursuing technical forms of writing.

Proofreading and staying focused are also important aspects of technical writing. Imagine this scenario. After you receive your degree in marketing, you decide to work as a copywriter (someone who writes text for advertisements) for a prestigious firm or company. Now, imagine you produce an advertisement for that company and you happen to use a word that is actually a vulgarity in another language. The damage, in the form of lost revenue for your company, would be astronomical. This example may seem a bit far-fetched, but it’s not impossible.

Technology in Marketing

In any profession, including marketing, it is important to master your available technologies. This can include using the latest software programs, equipment, writing techniques and research databases. Because of my limited knowledge on the type of technology that is typically used by people working in marketing, I'm going to once again turn to my interview with Dr. Dodds. During my interview I had a chance to learn about what technologies marketers use. Dodds said he used a few particular programs, including Excel and PowerPoint. However, he also stressed that one should not rely solely on these programs. Dr. Dodds stated that PowerPoint is quite popular among marketers; however, "overuse can lead to an absence of meaningful conversation and [healthy debate]" (W. Dodds, personal communication, September 21, 2007). He also described his use of Google Scholar and the research databases (like EBSCO) available via Fort Lewis' network. As you may have noticed, marketing is generally less technology dependent than say, computer science. This is because at the core of innovative marketing there are great minds. Creativity is conceivably the most important tool you'll use a marketer.

Nevertheless, as a student at Fort Lewis, you'll want to take advantage of the available resources and technologies. The most important of these resources are the academic databases available to you. You can access the business article databases (like *Business Source*) via Fort Lewis College's website (<http://library.fortlewis.edu/>). As a student, you'll have unlimited access to these databases, and I encourage to use them on a regular basis. I also encourage you to be careful when choosing articles for your own research. At one point, I was conducting research about alcohol advertising. To conduct my research, I used *Business Source Premier*. I found an article concerned with alcohol advertising, which seemed quite relevant to my research, at the time. Unfortunately, I didn't take note of the author's citations as carefully as I should have. As I

found out later, the article was more concerned with psychology than marketing. So, be sure that the articles you choose in your research are both applicable and relevant to your topic.

What Makes a Good Marketer?

So, do you think you'd make a good marketer based on what you've already read? To answer this question, you first have to understand what makes someone a good marketer. Marketing is arguably the most creative area of business. To be a good marketer, you have to be creative and able to conceptualize innovative ideas. Dr. Dodds said, "marketing research involves going out and watching people to gain a deeper understanding of the market place" (W. Dodds, personal communication, September 21, 2007). Being a skillful marketer is about understanding behavior, constantly trying to decode what makes people do what they do, and ultimately, figuring out how to make someone feel good about doing what you want them to do. If this sounds like a nefarious major, you're partially right. In spite of this, you ultimately have the choice in how you choose to market particular ideas or products. As a marketing major, your creative potential is only limited by your degree of willingness to induce change. With the application of knowledge and the fruition of your potential, you have the ability to change a great deal of minds.

Being a Successful Marketer at Fort Lewis

Finally, you're probably wondering what it takes to be a successful marketing major at Fort Lewis College. The marketing department is a tight-knit community. You'll want to introduce yourself to all the marketing professors as soon as possible. They have excellent advice and are highly knowledgeable. As far as classes are concerned, don't rush the marketing classes. From experience, I can say that you'll want to have some prior knowledge of business in general. Quickly complete Math 110 (college algebra) and complete at least one accounting and

economics class. The marketing professors at Fort Lewis expect the best, so you'll want to be prepared to meet those expectations. Take the advice of Dr. Dodds and "develop your communication skills, be able to capture your audience, and be able to show your analyses quantitatively" (W. Dodds, personal communication, September 21, 2007). If you're convinced that you'll make a good marketing major, I'd like to welcome you aboard.

Reference

Gerson, S. J., & Gerson, S. M. (2006). *Technical writing: Process and product* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.