

MKTG

Are you in?

A new learning solution.
A new conversation about textbook publishing.

'We asked. You told us. We listened.'

[02.16.2007]

Too big. Too costly. Too much information. Not enough of the *right* information. Within higher education, it is a pressing challenge. College students are buying fewer textbooks and reading fewer class assignments. When they do purchase the assigned text, they are voicing ever louder concerns about high prices and overloaded content that fails to connect with the way they learn best.

At Thomson South-Western, we believed there had to be a better way. To find it, we went to the source. Over the past year, we sought out marketing instructors and students across the country and asked them to help us revolutionize the model for higher education publishing.

Imagine if you could build a textbook from scratch. What would be the ideal teaching and learning solution for a Principles of Marketing course? What would it look like? What would it say? Would students use it and learn from it?

The answer that emerged was *MKTG*, introduced today at the Winter Marketing Educators' Conference in San Diego. This is its story.

Finding a new way | *How MKTG began*

Across disciplines, the college textbook market is undergoing broad transformation. While the traditional textbook remains the standard in most classes, its importance has been undercut by the Internet, other electronic learning tools, and the perception among many students that they can get by without buying the book.

In focus groups last year, one marketing student told the Thomson South-Western team that in a recent semester when she enrolled in four classes, she bought a single textbook – and only used it once. “I won’t do that again,” the student said.

Faculty members have long had their own concerns. Many students weren’t buying the textbooks that their instructors assigned. Those students who did buy the book often didn’t read the assignments or weren’t engaged by the content.

Last February, a team led by Thomson South-Western Publisher Neil Marquardt set out to find a new solution. Over the next 10 months, through conversations, focus groups, and surveys, the team interviewed more than 150 students and met with more than 75 marketing instructors from schools across the country.

What those faculty members and students helped shape is an innovative learning tool designed to fit the busy and diverse lifestyles of today’s college students.

What they helped open is a new conversation about textbook publishing.

We asked. You answered. We listened. | *A product development case study*

Textbook publishers traditionally have created products based almost exclusively on input from college and university faculty about how they teach and structure coursework. The *MKTG* team reached out to another stakeholder: today’s student.

On campuses and in classrooms across the country, the *MKTG* development team conducted nearly two dozen student focus groups during the spring and summer of 2006 to better understand how students learn. When do they study? Where do they study? Why?

In this early development phase, two broad findings shaped the group’s work:

- **A preference for print.** The digital natives in today’s college classrooms might be masters of media multi-tasking, but that is not how they want to learn. *Students said they wanted a core text, and they only wanted digital tools with proven value.*

“They didn’t want eye candy. They wanted to learn, and they wanted the textbook to be a meaningful tool for them,” said Jamie Gleich Bryant, the project’s developmental editor.

- **A struggle to balance life and school.** Ninety percent of students interviewed said they worked in part- or full-time jobs. On average, they studied about 31 hours each semester. When they faced reading assignments of 30 pages or more, students again and again said they followed the same basic approach: reading the first sentence of every paragraph and skimming the major concepts.

“It’s just virtually impossible, if you’re taking five courses, and you have to read 30 pages in each course each week,” one student told the *MKTG* team. “There’s just no time to do all the required reading.”

The *MKTG* team then turned to its most vital partners – college and university faculty – to reconcile student learning preferences with the best practices from your classrooms.

Some instructors raised concerns that a low-cost learning solution might sacrifice the editorially sound and highly-vetted content in Thomson’s core textbook products. In response, the *MKTG* team focused on expanding the value of its current marketing franchise, building the new text from a well-established Principles of Marketing book.

Other faculty questioned whether a more student-focused textbook would mean eliminating valuable classroom tools such as instructor’s manuals, slide presentations, and test banks. The development team responded by offering improved supplemental materials – and then adding more, including regularly updated news feeds, audio lecture summaries, and prep cards to help busy instructors better prepare for classes.

Student tested. Faculty approved. | *Introducing MKTG*

Together, faculty and students described how they would build a better textbook. The team at Thomson South-Western paid attention, and *MKTG* is the result. The name says it all: four letters that not only denote marketing classes in course catalogs and on bookstore shelves, but also speak to the way students refer to the course in text and instant messages.

This new student-tested, faculty-approved learning solution looks and reads like nothing available in higher education today. It features:

- A 350-page annual paperback edition, compared with 700+ page hardcover texts.
- Nineteen chapters adapted from Lamb/Hair/McDaniel, including all learning outcomes, key concepts and terms.

- “Chapter in Review” summaries for students; prep cards and news feeds for instructors.
- Online and cell phone quizzes, audio/MP3 downloads, and printable flash cards.
- \$49.95 suggested retail price, versus \$150 for a traditional textbook.

MKTG emphasizes accessibility, engagement, different student learning styles, and value. Students and instructors will find all of the high-quality core content of an introductory marketing text published by Thomson South-Western in a tightly-edited, easy-to-navigate design that draws students into learning.

When the *MKTG* prototype was unveiled to focus groups late last year, students said there was no comparison. “If you have this book sitting next to a traditional college textbook, and you have to choose, I’d choose this one,” one marketing student said. “Plus, you’re getting all this extra stuff. You’re getting twice the stuff at half the cost.”

Those early reactions are a testament to the customer-focused product development process, said Jack Calhoun, vice president and editorial director for Thomson South-Western. The thoughtful, extended conversations that shaped *MKTG* also ensured that this new text would help students learn better and instructors teach better.

“It’s a product that speaks with authority,” Calhoun said. “It’s a product that’s far more than just a good guess.”

MKTG will not be the right solution for every classroom. For some instructors and students, the traditional textbook model remains the best fit, and Thomson Higher Education will have the right product for those classes as well. But as they confront the reality of their students’ hectic lives, more and more marketing instructors have said they’re in – they are turning to *MKTG* as a better fit for today’s students and a better learning solution for their classes.

***MKTG*: Are you in?**

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