

STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD WITH ONLINE STUDENTS IN THE MARKETING DOMAIN

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Prior to engaging with LINC, my academic experience was limited to classroom teaching. The majority of the cohort consisted of fresh graduates with no exposure to the industry. They were accustomed to a standard pedagogy of “one to all”. However, my experience with LINC as an Online Facilitator taught me that the traditional method of “one size fits all” doesn’t work in coaching online students, where the interaction is more on a one to one basis.

Given that the majority of the students come with prior work experience, the cohort comprises broadly three different types of students, each requiring a specific approach.

- **Students who are new to online learning or are returning to studies after a long while** - These students require a lot of hand-holding right from trivial matters like tips on referencing, academic writing etc. to the explanation of different frameworks and theories. Some of them may be overwhelmed with the overall structure and content and may not open up about their apprehensions. We need to help them with “low hanging fruits” so that they smoothly sail through the unit. The initial interactions may revolve around basic details like how to search for articles/research papers in online databases, academic writing, referencing etc. along with discussions around academic concepts. Once they settle, probably after a couple of weeks, they may engage in detailed academic/assessment discussions.
- **Students who have done units earlier and are new to marketing as a subject** - These students, being familiar with academic writing and online learning, require subject knowledge such as clarification of academic concepts and theories. Explanation of marketing frameworks through examples from their industry works well in these cases. Some of them may also come from

non-marketing backgrounds. It’s essential in such cases to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of management and how exposure to marketing would help them enhance cross-functional relationships.

- **Students who work in the marketing domain and are quick to grab the concepts** - Typically, these students have worked/ are working in the marketing domain and have experience in areas such as retail/advertising/brand and product management. They like to stay on top of things by attending the webinars, completing their weekly readings etc. and would look forward to content over and above the textbook material. It is best to engage them in discussions related to the application of complex frameworks or concepts related to their businesses. Sharing the best marketing practices from other industries also works well with them. Besides, interacting with them provides us facilitators with an opportunity to understand the marketing approaches applied in different sectors.

All said and done, everything boils down to WIFM (What’s In It For Me). If we can end every call or interaction with that one key takeaway which they have not received from any of the available resources and which adds value to their academic pursuit, I think, we have struck the chord with them, and their probability of engaging in future conversations is greatly enhanced! ■