

USING A MULTIMEDIA MIX TO TEACH CONCEPTS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

An exercise is proposed which the author believes more carefully aligns contemporary undergraduate student interest with a faculty pedagogical delivery mechanism that meets the educational needs of both. The exercise involves the mixing of a piece of popular music synchronized to a slide show constructed using Microsoft's PowerPoint for the purpose of illustrating a concept, theory or idea as delineated by the business administration textbook. An example based on the song "Vincent" and synchronized with the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh is provided in the appendix.

INTRODUCTION

The authors believe that the traditional, 15-30 page academic term paper is not always appropriate for today's undergraduate business student who may be facing a future that involves running a pawn shop, dry cleaner or convenience store but certainly does not involve matriculating in a doctoral program for the purpose of earning a Ph.D. in business administration. Why then are so many business school academics wedded to the 15-30 page academic term paper as a pedagogical vehicle for teaching concepts of management? Perhaps if the answer is that term paper construction was suggested in the doctoral program, then we know that new questions must be asked.

Others have questioned the relevance and didacticism of the typical term paper when used in a business education course (Everett & Ladd, 2010; Carchiolo, Longheu, Malgeri, & Mangioni, 2007). For this reason, a multimedia "mix" exercise is proposed wherein students mix a selection of their own, preferred music ripped from a CD or downloaded from the Internet and synchronized with PowerPoint slides of their own choosing for the purpose of illustrating a concept of management. The authors believe that such an exercise can be more relevant and more didactic in terms of elucidating the concepts from the textbook.

The authors' example (provided in table one) utilizes a song which is admittedly more appropriate to the baby boom generation as opposed to the millennial generation or generation Y of today's typical undergraduate. Nevertheless, the song resonates to this day because of the story it tells. The song is "Vincent" by Don McLean (1971). The paintings were carefully chosen to be revealed in synchronization with the words of the song – which was undoubtedly Don McLean's intent all along (Wikipedia.org, 2010).

The song and the story of Vincent Van Gogh are well known to most. Van Gogh personifies what has been called the "neglected genius." During his lifetime, Van Gogh was sustained by his brother, Theo rather than by the work of his own, masterfully talented hands (Beaujean, 1999). In fact of the 900 oil paintings and 1100 drawings constituting his life's work, he sold only one: "Red Vineyard At Arles"

(1888) during his lifetime and this for an amount that was relatively insignificant not only by today's standards but also by the standards of his time (Hammacher, 1985). Unable to sustain himself not so much physically but certainly psychically, at the relatively young age of 37 he stood in a field in the southern part of France and shot himself in the stomach then died in a rather painful way two days later (Hulsker, 1990). Despite this tragic life or, perhaps in part because of it, today his paintings stand out as being among the most expensive and most recognizable works of art.

Themes from management or organizational behavior relevant to the song "Vincent" and the synchronized works of his art include ennui or a feeling of weariness and discontent, social alienation, dissonance and disgust. As a teaching and learning tool, the exercise is unique and can lead to combinations of art, photography, images and sound that are special for the student who makes these combinations.

REFLECTION

So many members of the professorate teach from the perspective of the management and/or organizational behavior textbook which is certainly understandable due to the tendency to adopt standard textbooks. Who can blame them? Unfortunately, some of these texts seem to present behavior in organizations as a series of positive vignettes almost leading to a 'happy meal' as a result of the McDonaldization or sanitization of business education.

The case of Vincent Van Gogh reverses the "norming, storming and performing" (Greenberg, 2010) business babble speak by presenting a more realistic scale involving performing, aversion, aberration, derangement and death. Unlike his works of art, his life was not copasetic but examining it in terms of his art is thought provoking due to the quality of the work products that he executed despite his personal difficulties. His canvases explode with colors that initially seem shocking but in time crystallize into figures, portraits, landscapes and vistas that are instantly recognizable as masterpieces.

-Insert Table 1 here-

THE ASSIGNMENT

Students are told via the syllabus that they shall be assessed at 20% of their overall grade for developing a "Multimedia Mix." After being exposed to the Van Gogh presentation, students are told that they are to develop their own show illustrating a concept, theme, theory or idea from the management textbook. The "mix" means that they will be mixing slides and music by ripping a song using Microsoft Windows Media Player or downloading it from the Internet. The song will be incorporated into Microsoft PowerPoint slides and "played across" the slides for the duration of the music. A brief introduction should precede the show explaining what concept, idea, theme or theory the student is attempting to illustrate and how and why he or she arrived at the chosen song and slides. A basic form is to use Google's image search engine to select slides which can be inserted into a PowerPoint slideshow and played in unison with a meaningful piece of music on a CD. "Slide show" should be selected at the top of PowerPoint's toolbar, then "Insert" and "sound." The song selected should be directed to "play across the slides." Microsoft's PowerPoint 2007 accepts:

- AIFF audio files (aiff)
- AU audio files (au)
- MIDI files (midi)
- MP-3 audio files (mp3)
- Windows audio files (wav)
- Windows Media Audio files (wma) (Atkinson, 2008).

In short, students are told that there is almost no limit to what can be done. They are cautioned, however, that slides/music/video must not be racist, excessively violent, pornographic or blatantly offensive. In fact, it is important for students to insure that none of the protected groups are negatively impacted or offended by virtue of the show. These groups include women, minorities, religious groups, the various nationalities, gays, lesbians, transgendered people and the elderly (Mathis and Jackson, 2010).

The construction of the multimedia show must be the sole work of the student (without outside writing or editing assistance but will probably be the original work of a singer, artist, performer, actor, etc.). The “mix” can include anything, but students are asked to first look at the topics in their textbook. Ideally, each student would select a different topic, but the final choice of the student is left “open.”

Student	Potential Topic of the “Mix”
1,17	The Field of Organizational Behavior
2,24	Perception and Learning: Understanding the Work Environment
3,18	Individual Differences
4,25	Emotions and Stress on the Job
5,26	Work Related Attitudes: Feelings about Jobs, Orgs. and People
6,27	Motivation in Organizations
7,28	Career Dynamics
8,29	Group Processes and Work Teams
9,30	Communication in Organizations
10,31	Decision Making in Organizations
11,32	Interpersonal Behavior: Working With and Against Others
12, 19	Influence, Power and Politics in Organizations
13, 20	Leadership in Organizations
14, 21	Organizational Culture, Creativity and Innovation
15, 22	Organizational Structure and Design
16, 23	Managing Organization Change

(Greenberg, 2011)

Faculty may wish to assess students based on the following guidelines.

Multimedia Mix Presentation Guidelines Criteria (Max. 20 points each)

1. Maintain speaker balance regarding posture and comportment. _____
2. The visuals (what we see). _____
3. The audio (what we hear). _____
3. Correct and effective use of gestures _____
5. Ability to "connect" with the audience
by providing insight, and meaning into policy matters _____
- Total (Max. 100 points). _____

CONCLUSION

The authors believe that utilizing a “multimedia mix” approach to a major assignment in the business management course will add a new dimension to the faculty member’s teaching repertoire. In the past, students have constructed a number of timely and communicative sound shows illustrating such themes as drug abuse and addiction, social alienation, workplace bullying and corporate downsizing. When built in a multimedia mix, the student creates themes that are both personally important to him or her and rife with meaning for the general audience because - more often than not - the mix contains moving messages for these difficult times.

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Table 1

Slide #	“Vincent” by Don McLean (1981)	Selected Painting	Year
1	Starry, starry night	“The starry night.”	1889
2	paint your palette blue and grey,	“Self-portrait in front of the easel”	1888
3	look out on a summer’s day	“Fishing in spring.”	1887
4	with eyes that know the darkness in my soul.	“Self-portrait with bandaged ear.”	1889
5	Shadows on the hills	“The church at Auvers”	1890
6	sketch the trees	“Mulberry tree.”	1889

7	and the daffodils;	<i>"Vase and Flowers"</i>	1887
8	catch the breeze	<i>"Orchard in blossom with view of Arles"</i>	1889
9	and the winter chills	<i>"Two peasant women digging in field with snow."</i>	1890
10	in colors on the snowy linen land.	<i>"Landscape with snow"</i>	1888
11	Now I understand	<i>"Portrait of Dr. Gachet"</i>	1890
12	what you tried to say to me,	<i>"Self-portrait"</i>	1889
13	how you suffered for your sanity,	<i>"Self-portrait"</i>	1888
14	how you tried to set them free.	<i>"The good Samaritan"</i>	1890
15	They would not listen they did not know how -	<i>"Avenue of poplars at sunset"</i>	1884
16	perhaps they'll listen now.	<i>"Portrait of Madame Trabuc"</i>	1889
17	Starry, starry night	<i>"The starry night over the Rhone"</i>	1888
18	flaming flowers that brightly blaze,	<i>"Courtyard at Arles"</i>	1890
19	swirling clouds in violet haze	<i>"Cypress trees"</i>	1889
20	reflect in Vincent's eyes of China blue.	<i>"Self-portrait"</i>	1889
21	Colors changing hue	<i>"Thatched cottages in the sunshine"</i>	1890
22	morning fields of amber grain,	<i>"Rest from work"</i>	1890
23	weathered faces lined in pain	<i>"The potato eaters"</i>	1885
24	are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand.	<i>"The schoolboy" (Camille Rouiln)</i>	1888
25	Now I understand what you tried to say to me	<i>"The smoker"</i>	1888
26	and how you suffered for your sanity	<i>Self portrait with straw hat</i>	1887
27	how you tried to set them free,	<i>Self portrait with bandaged ear and pipe</i>	1889
28	they would not listen,	<i>"The red vineyard"</i>	1888
29	they did not know how - perhaps they'll listen now.	<i>"Portrait of Eugene Boch"</i>	1888
30	For they could not love you,	<i>"Agostina Segatori at the café du Tambourin"</i>	1887
31	but still your love was true	<i>"Self-portrait with grey felt hat III"</i>	1886
32	and when no hope was left inside on that starry, starry night,	<i>"Old man in sorrow"</i>	1890
33	you took your life as lovers often do,	<i>"Vincent's chair with his pipe"</i>	1888
34	but I could have told you Vincent,	<i>"Portrait of Joseph Roulin"</i>	1888
35	this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you.	<i>"Self-portrait in a straw hat"</i>	1887
36	Starry, starry night	<i>"Café terrace at night"</i>	1888
37	portraits hung in empty halls	<i>"Corridor of Saint Paul Asylum in Saint Remy"</i>	1889
38	frameless heads on nameless walls	<i>"The reaper"</i>	1889
39	with eyes that watch the world and can't forget.	<i>"The Zouave"</i>	1888
40	Like the strangers that you've met:	<i>"The sower"</i>	1888
41	the ragged men in ragged clothes,	<i>"Portrait of Patience Escalier"</i>	1888
42	the silver thorn of bloody rose	<i>"Young girl standing against a background of wheat"</i>	1890
43	lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow.	<i>"Two cut sunflower"</i>	1887
44	Now I think I know what you tried to say to me	<i>"Woman of Arles"</i>	1888
45	what you tried to say to me	<i>"Portrait of the art dealer A. Reid"</i>	1887

46	and how you suffered for your sanity,	<i>"Rocks with oak tree"</i>	1888
47	how you tried to set them free.	<i>"Woman winding yarn"</i>	1885
48	They would not listen they're not listening still -	<i>"The reaper"</i>	1888
49	perhaps they never will...	<i>"Pair of shoes"</i>	1887