

Me Poster

Introduction

The Me Poster is an activity that allows participants to share an advertisement of their favorite skill. Participants are asked to create a poster advertising a class they would like to lead based on a unique skill they have. They learn what kinds of things to include in the ad to make it more attractive and informative. Participants also learn that the process offers a fail safe - fail fast method that shows them that others may or may not be so interested in their passions. If they find that others are not interested, feedback will allow them to determine whether the idea needs to be modified or abandoned. The exercise is good as an icebreaker to allow class members to get to know each other, or to demonstrate the following skills: fail safe – fail fast, team building, advertising/marketing, pitching entrepreneurial ideas. The exercise can be used in undergraduate, graduate or executive level classes.

Learning Objectives

The following learning objectives will result from this exercise:

- **Ice breaker:** Participants will learn a new and fun way to do an icebreaker for any class. This exercise will give students an opportunity to learn more about each other's personal interests and talents.
- **Learn to fail safe – fail fast:** The exercise will demonstrate a way to fail safe – fail fast, where students can quickly learn whether an idea they want to take to market has merit, needs to be modified, or abandoned.
- **Engage in team building:** By getting to know each other's personal interests and talents, participants of this exercise can build stronger teams.
- **Learn how to effectively advertise/market ideas:** Discussions during this exercise will help students understand what information to include in advertisements and how to make ads more attractive to potential customers. Effectively marketing an idea is an important method to learn to share ideas.
- **Practice pitching entrepreneurial ideas and learn how to improve pitches to make products more marketable:** Making a poster of an entrepreneurial idea helps students to learn how to effectively share their ideas in an almost "pitch" fashion. The poster must be a brief but focused version of the idea they want to sell. They will learn which posters were most effective in getting ideas across to the target audience.

Theoretical Foundation/Teach implications

Research suggests that individuals who have received pitch training get higher ratings by investors (Clingsmith & Shane, 2017). Entrepreneurial students often believe that new product or service ideas are easily sellable. They believe that since they have a passion for the business, future customers will be equally excited and sales will be inevitable. It is difficult to teach students that others may not share their passions. This exercise allows the instructor to provide instruction to students on how to give a better pictorial idea pitch. Lessons learned can also be applied to verbal elevator pitches.

Exercise Overview

This exercise is used to demonstrate the ideas of marketing/advertising and fail safe – fail fast. Participants are asked to come up with a topic they are passionate about – a class they could uniquely lead. After a brief discussion on what kinds of information would be important to include on a poster to advertise this class, they will come up with a list of at least three ideas for the class. They will then choose one of those ideas to advertise in a poster. Each table will be provided with colored pencils to use to create their individual posters. The posters will be collected and displayed. Class members will then view all the posters and vote on which classes they would like to attend. Once the votes are tallied, we discuss why some classes appeared to be more interesting than others? What can we learn about what to include in advertisements to make them more appealing? What can we learn about entrepreneurial ideas and the concept of fail safe – fail fast?

Attendees will likely find that posters with just the right amount of detail will pique more interest, those that are more closely aligned with personal interests will also lead to more votes. Participants should also learn that if the poster was not of high interest to others, they should get feedback to learn what to tweak or abandon the idea altogether. Students will learn that just because they are very passionate about a topic, it may not be a sellable idea. It is necessary to get a large amount of feedback about an idea early on in the planning stages to see how to move forward or whether to move forward with the idea at all.

Session Description

The activity is best for a 60 minute session but can be extended to up to 90 minutes. The session will proceed as follows:

1. Instruct participants that they will have the opportunity to lead a class on something they like the most. They should think of a topic that they could uniquely lead. What topic do you know well that you could teach to others? Maybe you have an activity that you love to lead and could show to the class? Or maybe you simply want to entertain people with a special skill you have? Tell students that they won't actually have to lead the class on the topic, but it should be something they are passionate about. Instruct participants to make a list of what kinds of classes they could offer. – 5 mins.
2. Discuss with participants the kinds of information they should include on a poster advertising their class. – 10 mins.
3. Now, think more deeply about three of the topics on the list of skills you came up with. What would you say about each of them? Detail how you would approach each of the three topics if you were to run a class on them. – 5 mins.
4. With the paper and colored pencils provided, please make a poster to advertise one of your special skills. It should take up the whole piece of paper and clearly demonstrate the skill you will be sharing with the class. Make sure it is attractive and it gives viewers

enough information about what is actually offered in order to encourage them to attend your session. -10 mins.

5. Participants' posters will then be collected and placed on a centrally located table for viewing. Each poster will have a voting tab next to it where viewers can vote whether they would be interested in attending the session advertised. The class will then have an opportunity to walk around and view all the posters. They will mark the voting tabs for the sessions they are interested in attending. – 15 mins.
6. The voting tabs will be tallied and the participants will be asked to discuss what made the posters more or less attractive to them. We will then discuss reasons why this might be useful in different classes. – 15 mins.

References

Clingingsmith, D. & Shane, S. (2017). *Training Aspiring Entrepreneurs to Pitch Experienced Investors: Evidence from a Field Experiment in the United States*. Management Science. *Pubsonline.informs.org*. Retrieved 16 January 2018, from <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/mnsc.2017.2882>