**Classroom and Experiential Learning – Utilizing Riipen.com to Educate and Motivate**

**Abstract**

The objective of this roundtable discussion is to help business, management and accounting academics gain an understanding of experiential learning via the Riipen.com platform. From our own experience in accounting classes at two Northeast U.S. public universities in the Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 semesters, we attest to the benefits of using Riipen.com and sidentify the added value of experiential learning for students, business partners, faculty, and universities. We also present a sample grading rubric to assess students’ learning.

**Keywords**

 Riipen.com; experiential learning; class projects

**Introduction**

The objective of this roundtable discussion is to help business, management and accounting academics gain an understanding of experiential learning via the Riipen.com platform. From our own experience in accounting classes at two Northeast U.S. public universities in the Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 semesters, we attest to the benefits of using Riipen.com and identify the added value of experiential learning for students, business partners, faculty, and universities. We also present a sample grading rubric to assess students’ learning. The intended outcome of the discussion is to motivate faculty to participate in Riipen class-business partnerships and virtual internships. The target audience is business, management, accounting, healthcare, and other educators at higher education institutions.

**Teaching Implications**

The academic and pedagogical literature shows that experiential learning in the business, management, and accounting classroom is often lacking (Madsen, 2015; McBride, Hannon and Burns, 2005; Pathways Commission, n.d.; Pathways Commission, 2012; Christensen and Woodland, 2016; Strupecky and Whittenz, 2004), although it is considered valuable by employers. Our session contributes to effective teaching and learning in the fields of business, management, and accounting, among other disciplines, by introducing the audience to a platform from Canada, Riipen.com that matches student classes with real-world businesses. The business presents an issue or a problem for the class to solve. Students participate in teams and propose solutions in teams under the direction of the instructor. Students are graded on their work and present their solutions to the business in written or/and oral format.

**Session Description**

We plan to present PowerPoints and comment on each slide. We will explain how Riipen.com works for class projects and individual student internships. We will share our experience using Riipen.com from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021 at two universities in the U.S. We will spend about 30-40 minutes on the presentation and then – about 20-30 minutes will be reserved for Questions and Answers. Some of the companies our classes partnered with are [www.HoneySweetieAcres.com](http://www.HoneySweetieAcres.com) (preparation of a business plan), [www.powerfulpartnersinc.com](http://www.powerfulpartnersinc.com) (grow customer base through social media), [www.mylawn.care](http://www.mylawn.care) ( evaluating customer relationship management systems) and [www.Pillir.com](http://www.Pillir.com) (preparation of a client survey for this enterprise systems disruptor).

What is Riipen? It is North America’s largest marketplace where organizations of all sizes connect with educators and college students on short-term projects. Riipen is a comprehensive experiential learning platform. It allows educators to easily launch and manage industry-focused experiential learning in the classroom. It easily integrates work and education in one place.

How does Riipen work? The instructor creates a course page using online tools with the help of a Riipen employee. The class project is matched with a company (either side can send requests and accept/reject requests). The instructor invites students to participate and oversees, tracks and reports on student progress. Students presents their work to the business partner at the end.

This experiential learning is aligned with Recommendation 1 of the Pathway Commission (n.d.) to educate the next generation of accountants in such a way that they do not just know the technical aspects of accounting, but also get to experience how accounting contributes to business decision making and a prosperous society. Other professions, such as healthcare and management, have long recognized the value of experiential learning. Students in the health profession benefit from clinical experiences in which they apply their knowledge in many different settings and situations. So too can accounting and management students benefit from experiential learning opportunities, such as Riipen’s, and obtain hands-on learning.

Steps to follow when using Riipen: Create a Professor account on Riipen.com; A sales representative will contact you and ask for your syllabus for the following or current semester; You will discuss with the Riipen sales representative and edit together the Riipen project site he/she has created for you; Number of students; Start of semester and end of semester dates; Size of desired industry partner; Location of desired industry partner; Learning objectives and project outcomes, etc.; You will make the Project site live and then you can request business projects and accept/reject business requests.

What incentives do business partners offer? Feedback; Student employment; T-shirts and other merchandize; Recommendation letters; Experience for résumés, etc.

How does the business benefit? Low cost of $500 per class project (more for large businesses); Students or their school pay $50 per student per Riipen project; Inexpensive way to recruit students; Business solutions; Collaboration with academia.

How does the student benefit? Students can create a student profile on Riipen.com where the business partner endorses the skills developed (similarly to LinkedIn); Individual Virtual Internships are also available, not just whole class projects. You need to talk to your Internships Coordinator about your school’s internships requirements (number of hours needed, paperwork, etc.); Real world business experience at a low cost ($50 per student); Teamwork with classmates that results in a presentation and/or a written portfolio for the business partner; Potential employment, letter of recommendation, feedback, etc. If the cost seems too high, an Open Educational Resource (OER) free textbook may be adopted that semester to mitigate for the $50 increase in cost. Please talk to your Librarian about OER textbooks in your subject area.

How does the instructor/university benefit? Your re-appointment portfolio/tenure portfolio will contain an important experiential learning component and community-based partnership; Connections with industry partners for future research and grant applications will ensue; You help your university market itself via experiential learning to prospective students (via possible news about your Riipen experience on the university website) and thus helps with student enrollment. Parents and prospective students’ value experiential learning and virtual internship opportunities.

We present a sample grading rubric at the end of the PowerPoint presentation based on a Spring 2020 class project with Megan, a social media influencer from Chicago, Illinois.

**Time Requested**

60 minutes

**Resource Needs**

PC computer/projector

**Conference Track**

“Tradition Meets Technology: Finding Ways Forward” – June 2021 MOBTS conference

“Conference Theme Track” – Riipen.com is a website platform and it is an example of technological innovations that connect university classes with real-world businesses.

**Unique Contribution**

1. You have presented the work in this proposal before, at MOBTS or elsewhere? If yes, explain how this proposal is different.

No, we have not.

2. The proposal is currently under review elsewhere. If yes, explain how it will be different at the MOBTS conference.

Not under review elsewhere.

**References**

Madsen, P. E. (2015). Has the quality of accounting education declined? *Accounting Review*, *90*(3), 1115–1147.

McBride, H., Hannon, S., & Burns, B. (2005). Developing critical thinking abilities in business and accounting graduates. *The Irish Accounting Review*, *12*(2), 23–45.

Pathways Commission. (n.d.). *Pathways images*. Retrieved from http://commons.aaahq.org/groups/2d690969a3/summary

Pathways Commission. (2012). The Pathways Commission accounting higher education: Charting a national strategy for the next generation of accountants. Retrieved from <http://commons.aaahq.org/groups/2d690969a3/summary>

Christensen, A.L., & Woodland A. M. (2016). Is participation in the volunteer income tax assistance (VITA) program associated with students’ problem-solving skills and professional commitment? *Issues in Accounting Education*. 31, No. 1 DOI: 10.2308/iace-51197 2016. pp. 71–90.

Strupecky, C., D. & Whittenz, D. (2004). Accounting service-learning experiences and the IRS volunteer income tax assistance programme: a teaching note. Accounting Education. 13 (1), 101–112.