

GREAT MARKETERS AS ROLE MODELS: THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS STUDENTS CAN EMULATE

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ABSTRACT

Marketing courses seldom identify the names of great marketers as role models for aspiring marketing students, nor do they present information about the key characteristics that support marketing greatness. This study examines the characteristics of great marketers from the viewpoint of marketing scholars. Using content analysis of a national sample of descriptions of great marketers, the study identifies five underlying traits that great marketers possess in large measure: (1) perceptive learning, (2) visionary planning, (3) pioneering leadership, (4) promotional communications, and (5) energetic persistence. Brief biographical sketches of great marketers are provided to illustrate these traits in action. The results can be used by educators to assist students in understanding and emulating great marketers.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a professor walked into her marketing class at the end of the semester and gave her students a one-minute assignment. "Take out a blank piece of paper," she said, "and in the next minute, list as many *great marketers* as you can." Student response was typical – a lot of blank looks. In their written responses, just a third of the students were able to name one or more individuals, the rest either named companies or brands, or handed in a blank sheet of paper. Of the 25 individuals actually named on student submissions, four were commendable choices – Sam Walton, Bill Gates, Henry Ford, and Walt Disney – but these four attained only 3 percent of the mentions. The names on the rest of the list were of lesser consequence, and included four current classmates, three athletes, three faculty members, the three co-authors of the textbook used in the course, two skin magazine publishers, two movie stars, two management consultants, one governor, and one talk-show host – not exactly what one would call a "Who's Who" of marketing!

Name just about any popular field of endeavor, and a majority of students taking courses in that discipline will be able to identify at least one of the great contributors to that field. Philosophy has Kant, psychology has Freud, economics has Keynes, physics has Einstein, and astronomy has Kepler, to name just a few. But the field of marketing seems to ignore the role of its key contributors. Instead of focusing on individuals and their contributions, our discipline tends to champion great marketing organizations in its lectures and texts. This observation raises several questions for analysis: Who are the great market-

ers and why do our students know so little about them? What personal characteristics do great marketers possess? And further, how can information about great marketer role models be incorporated into our textbooks and courses so that aspiring marketing students will have appropriate human role models that they might emulate?

Faculty routinely can be heard challenging students to become the best marketers they can be, but this is a hollow challenge if guidelines are not provided. While marketing has its share of great marketing minds that have transformed great ideas into great works, a review of the extant marketing texts required for marketing courses suggests that there is little attention paid to who are the great marketers and what are the characteristics that define marketing greatness. Accordingly, marketing students may be left with an incomplete understanding of their field and what they must do to be successful in it.

A search of the peer-reviewed literature provides little help in answering these questions. Previous work on the subject of marketing greatness is scarce, and one is hard pressed to find a list of traits that a good marketer should possess, much less a list of the characteristics that portend greatness. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to propose a definition and model of marketing greatness that can be used in marketing classes, to identify a list of common characteristics of marketing greatness, and finally, to identify some of the great marketers who personify these characteristics. The discussion of these great marketers in the classroom environment can help facilitate learning by providing role models to which students can anchor marketing concepts and ideas. Furthermore, it is hoped that as a result of the encouragement

offered in this study, marketing educators will perform additional research to identify and promote marketing greatness among their students. In accomplishing this purpose, the study is divided according to the following sections: (1) the importance of role models in marketing, (2) survey method and results, (3) identification of the model, (4) identification of five great marketers, (5) discussion, (6) limitation and future research, and (7) conclusion.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS IN MARKETING

Students in all academic disciplines, and people in general, tend to engage in vicarious learning by observing and adopting role models (Martin and Bush 2000; Moberg 2000). But unlike the physical sciences, where textbooks generally provide background information and champion the contributions of famous scientists, marketing texts tend to downplay the contributions of individual marketers. Instead, texts focus on companies, brands, and an occasional company founder. Without standard marketing text coverage, it is no wonder that our students have difficulty in identifying individuals who are exceptional at marketing.

Without an explicit exposure to marketing greats, the role models chosen by marketing students tend to be famous athletes, television personalities, movie stars, teachers, or parents (Martin and Bush 2000). These role models have a profound influence on the student's market knowledge and materialism levels (Clark, Martin, and Bush 2001), choice of major (Rask and Bailey 2002) and career choice decisions (Karunanayake and Nauta 2004). Indeed, role models have been suggested as key determinants of lifetime earnings potential (Zax and Rees 2002). Marketing students need exposure to marketing greats so that they can adopt degree and career-appropriate role models and be inspired to establish reasonable professional goals.

Greatness is described as the quality that enables one to introduce something original that changes how thousands of others think, feel, or behave (Simonton 1994). Definitions of marketing are myriad, and have been developed from various perspectives and at multiple levels of analysis. One that marketers quote often is the one adopted by the American Marketing Association, which essentially states that marketing is deploying the product, price, place, and promotion (4 P's) to create satisfying exchanges of ideas, goods, and services (Berkowitz et al. 2000). Accordingly, it is proposed that a reasonable definition of *great marketing* is changing how thousands think, feel or behave through the deployment of the 4 P's to create satisfying exchanges. Great marketers, in turn, are individuals that do great marketing. But who are the great marketers of our times? And, why are they considered great?

METHOD

This study followed an inductive approach to theory development, in which generalizable findings were derived by aggregating individual observations. Marketing scholars were chosen as the target population, as these individuals have dedicated their lives to studying the field of marketing and teaching students about what constitutes good practice. It was deemed that these scholars should be in a better position to provide input on the subject of marketing greatness.

A "Great Marketers" web site was constructed to receive nominations, information, and comments about the individuals that marketing scholars believed were the great marketers of our times. The site was then publicized through a popular e-mail list for marketing academics and faculty were invited to visit the site and submit their opinions. When participants visited the site, each was able to (1) view posted nominations of great marketers and read the rationale provided by previous nominators; (2) add support or refute previously nominated great marketers; (3) nominate their own personal choice for great marketer; or (4) post support rationale for their choice. After one week, 150 visitors to the site had provided 66 nominations and supportive comments for 29 different great marketer nominees. The final nominations list included 18 marketing practitioners and 11 noted academics (see Table 1).

Following appropriate content analysis methodology (Bickman and Rog 1998; Kassirjian 1977; Weber 1985), a key word in context (KWIC) analysis was performed using TextStat 2.1 software. The software analysis identified 126 different action words that were used by the respondents in providing rationale for a particular great marketer candidate. Next, six marketing scholars worked together as a group to identify the common themes present in the 126 action words. Their efforts resulted in the creation of five groups of key words. Finally, a different group of six marketing scholars served as expert judges to corroborate the reliability of the first classification, with each expert rating each word-factor classification according to relevancy and fit. A 70 percent proportion of inter-judge agreement was attained which translates to a Proportional Reduction in Loss (PRL) reliability of 0.99 as per Rust and Cooil (1994). This lends strong credibility to the reliability of the classifications. As a result of this procedure, 29 words with low relevancy and 9 words with low fit were eliminated from the list, leaving 88 action words for further analysis. Five factors comprising marketing greatness were confirmed, and named as follows: (1) visionary planning, (2) pioneering leadership, (3) promotional communications, (4) perceptive learning, and (5) energetic persistence (Table 2).

TABLE 1
GREAT MARKETERS AND THEIR AFFILIATIONS

Practitioners	Academics
Rachel Carson, <i>Author of Silent Spring</i> Ron Cox, <i>Wrigley Gum</i> Walt Disney, <i>Disney Corporation</i> Jim Donnelly, <i>Donnelly Communications</i> Henry Ford, <i>Ford Motor Company</i> Bill Gates, <i>Microsoft</i> John Harvard, <i>Harvard University</i> Milton Hershey, <i>Hershey Chocolate</i> Claude C. Hopkins, <i>Scientific Advertising</i> Lee Iacocca, <i>Chrysler Corporation (and Ford)</i> Herb Kelleher, <i>Southwest Airlines</i> Ray Kroc, <i>McDonalds</i> Stanley Marcus, <i>Neiman Marcus</i> Rupert Murdoch, <i>News Corporation, Ltd.</i> Colonel Tom Parker, <i>Agent for Elvis Presley</i> Harlan Sanders, <i>Kentucky Fried Chicken</i> Bill Veck, <i>Sports Marketing</i> Sam Walton, <i>Wal-Mart</i>	Wroe Alderson, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i> Michael J. Baker, <i>University of Strathclyde</i> Russell Belk, <i>University of Utah</i> Leonard Berry, <i>Texas A & M University</i> Andrew Ehrenberg, <i>South Bank University</i> O.C. Ferrell, <i>Colorado State University</i> Paul Green, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i> Shelby D. Hunt, <i>Texas Tech University</i> Philip Kotler, <i>Northwestern University</i> Tom Leigh, <i>University of Georgia</i> Jag Sheth, <i>Emory University</i>

TABLE 2
MARKETING GREATNESS FACTORS AND KEY WORDS

Factor	Key Words
Visionary Planning	Business model, consulting, consistent, created, creation, develop, developer, development, high standards, integrated, intuitive, involved, new standards, niche, paradigm, planner, proactive, technology, timing, vision, and visionary.
Pioneering Leadership	Affecting lives, beneficial, empower, ethics, first, founded, goal-directed, goal-setting, great, image, invent, innovative, leadership, marketing management, market share, new product, pioneer, respectable, responsible, and sales management.
Promotional Communications	Communicator, demonstrated, influenced, marketer, marketing, marketing domain, merchandising, motivator, preached, promoter, promotional, publicity, redefine, refine, selling, and value proposition.
Perceptive Learning	Academic, customer-oriented, insight, intellectual, learned, learner, learning, perceptive, recognized, scholarship, theory, thought, unfilled needs, and wisdom.
Energetic Persistence	Ability, achieve, application, apply, best, career, contributed, efficient, focus, impact, indelible, never tire, persevere, practitioner, practiced, profound, provide, rigor, satisfy, service, strong, style, success, superb, value, and worldwide.

A MODEL OF MARKETING GREATNESS

The five factors uncovered through the content analysis procedures comprise an overall model that addresses the key question raised in the introductory section, “what are the characteristics that underlie marketing greatness?” Each of the five factors is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Visionary Planning. Great marketers are great planners. The analysis suggested such planning terms as integrate, planner, intuition, vision, and good timing, all of which support a successful planning orientation. Great marketers apparently have the vision to see where they want to go and the discipline to develop a plan to get there. They do more than organize; more importantly, they execute the fundamentals of business planning well. Great marketers engage in proactive planning, possessing uncommon vision of not only what is possible, but what is most workable. Great marketers are passionate about what they do, and take the necessary steps to implement programs well.

Pioneering Leadership. Great marketers have the ability to lead people in doing innovative things. Leadership is defined as a process by which one influences the behaviors of others toward the accomplishment of specific goals (Stanton, Buskirk, and Spiro 1991), and great marketers seem to be accomplished motivators and communicators. In order for any individual to be successful, that individual must be persuasive in helping others appreciate the benefits of the recommended course of action. Great marketers are masterful persuaders and also empower others by involving them in important activities and decisions. Great marketers take innovative actions and become the first mover with that action’s implementation.

Promotional Communications. Great marketers possess very effective communication skills: they are legendary in motivating others by presenting their ideas in compelling fashion. Great marketers have an uncommon ability to turn a phrase, to display merchandise, to demonstrate benefits of a course of action, to generate positive word-of-mouth, and to flat-out promote better than their competition. Marketing greatness is characterized by effective persuasion and creative personal influence.

Perceptive Learning. Based upon the nominations and comments from the marketing faculty participants, great marketers are great learners. The KWIC analysis identified words such as “academic,” “intellectual,” “scholarship,” “learned,” “theory,” and “wisdom,” all of which suggest a strong learning orientation. Furthermore, this learning orientation appears to stem from customer contact and clear thinking. Great marketers observe customers, understand their needs, and learn what motivates them. Unlike those who make the mistake of focusing solely on profit maximization, great marketers seek to meet the needs of the marketplace and create value for the

customer as a central philosophy. The weight of the evidence suggests that great marketers are intuitive and have a strong desire to keep pace with changes in the marketplace by learning new ideas. New technologies and changing customers’ preferences are only part of learning, and great marketers learn from past mistakes while effectively utilizing a broad range of information resources.

Energetic Persistence. Great marketers are also great doers. They are not afraid to try, but do so strategically and with a purpose. Great marketers are able to “dream,” developing fresh ideas and perspectives that follow the uncommon path. Innovation is an essential ingredient, but so is perseverance. Great marketers must have a strong inner drive and desire to endure even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. Challenges may include physical suffering, mental anguish, emotional pain, or financial hardship. A great doer completes one’s goals despite these obstacles. Great doers also have the ability to instill a sense of value congruence among his or her affiliates. Value congruence ensures that each person in an organization strives for the same objective. In order to accomplish goals and tasks, a great doer must get organizational members to see the importance of their tasks and how each job impacts business success.

In summary, then, this study found five factors that comprise marketing greatness: (1) visionary planning, (2) pioneering leadership, (3) promotional communications, (4) perceptive learning, and (5) energetic persistence. Marketing faculty can present these factors as characteristics that students should strive to attain, should they wish to be considered marketing greats. But more than merely knowing the characteristics, students need to hear about actual people and how they applied the characteristics for success. Accordingly, in the following pages, attention is now turned toward some of the great marketers that illustrate these traits in action.

EXAMPLES OF GREAT MARKETERS

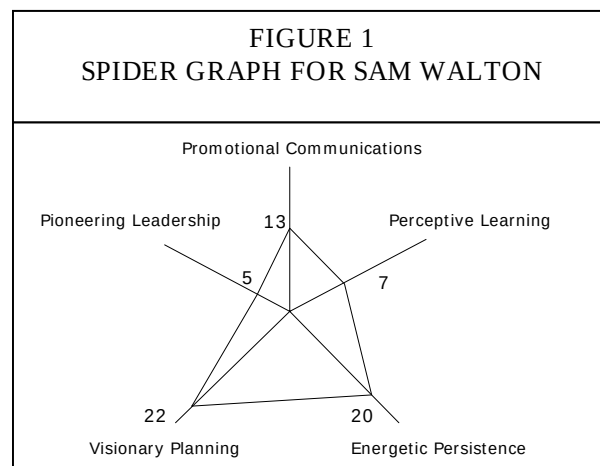
After reviewing the names and corroborating information in support of the 29 great marketers nominated, spider graphs (Harris 1999) were produced to create a visual display of how each great marketer nominee was rated on each factor. Values for each of the five axes were computed by determining the percentage of all action words comprising a factor that were used in the great marketer nomination support commentaries. Thus, the spider graph provides a quick visual portrayal of the perceived relative strengths of each candidate.

Next, a sub-set of five great marketers was selected for a more in-depth discussion. These five had the greatest number of multiple nominations, and seemed to offer a compelling rationale for their greatness by virtue of their accomplishments and lives. Therefore, they each represent marketing greatness. However, this research did not

attempt to select a “winner” or rank the nominees. Thus, the individuals selected for discussion are not to be construed as the five top marketers of our times. But, we would argue that this select group of five probably ranks in the top 20 percent, and is certainly appropriate for marketing educators to offer in classroom discussions as marketing icons. Accordingly, in the following section, the characteristics and contributions of five great marketers are described. These great marketers include Sam Walton, Walt Disney, Colonel Tom Parker, Henry Ford, and Philip Kotler.

Sam Walton

The founder of the Wal-Mart enterprise impressed marketing scholars with his vision and ability to plan and this result is reflected in Figure 1 by a high score for visionary planning. Sam Walton had the vision to create the most successful retail empire of our times (Ortega 2000; Walton 1993). After graduating from college, Walton briefly went to work for J. C. Penney, then his father-in-law loaned him \$20,000 to purchase a Ben Franklin franchise in Newport, Arkansas. When the five-year lease on the store expired, the owner forced Walton out, but Sam had already realized that his place was in retailing, and had developed a vision for a winning retail formula. Over the next ten years, Walton acquired nine Ben Franklin stores in Arkansas and Missouri.



But Sam Walton had his sites set on something much bigger, and in 1962 he opened his first discount store, calling it Wal-Mart. The concept was a phenomenal success, and Walton began a relentless pursuit of building volume and driving costs out of the system. By cutting profit margins low, it was crucial that Wal-Mart boost sales and grow at an unprecedented pace. Walton traveled the countryside, spotting potential sites between towns, purchased the land and started construction. Walton’s planning was firmly anchored in hiring good people and utilizing technology to grow business. A good example was his approach to finding and hiring computer experts

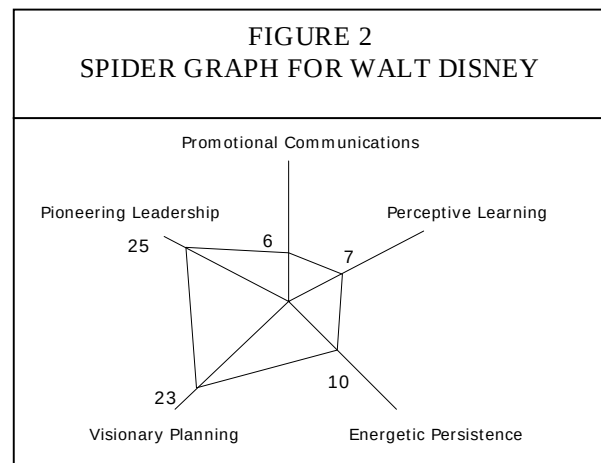
to computerize his merchandising system. In 1966, he attended an IBM school in New York, but not for the purpose of learning computer skills. Rather, his purpose was to meet, identify and then hire the top graduates. As a result of those hires, Wal-Mart’s logistics system is now the standard of excellence throughout the world.

Walt Disney

In 1923, Disney set out for California with \$40 in his pocket, a few drawing materials, and plenty of pioneering leadership. In 1928 he created Mickey Mouse, a character that made his screen debut in “Steamboat Willie,” the first fully synchronized sound cartoon. During the next twenty years, Disney created the first process for color films (Technicolor), the first full-length animated motion picture, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and other classics such as *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, *Dumbo*, and *Bambi*, and the first film combining animation and live performance, *The Three Caballeros*. Disney also pioneered in television programming, as he was the first to go with full-color in 1961. Disney further displayed pioneering leadership in his opening of Disneyland, a magic kingdom for family entertainment, and then he turned his attention to the plight of America’s cities, creating Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) and building a 43 square mile Disney theme park around it. From cartoons, to film, to color television, and to family theme parks, Disney established a reputation as the king of family entertainment.

Disney pioneered animation as a new product form, developing it as a new entertainment paradigm (Capodaglia and Jackson 1998). He then went on to develop and refine family-oriented theme parks that set new standards for customer service. He illustrates all five characteristics of greatness, but most especially pioneering leadership in applying marketing principles to satisfy what he recognized as unfilled customer needs in entertainment (Figure 2).

Walt exhibited curiosity and a will to succeed, and explained his success by saying, “When you’re curious,



you find lots of interesting things to do” (Disney 2004). A pioneer and innovator, Disney possessed an extremely fertile imagination, taking the dreams of everyday Americans and devising ways to make them come true. He had a unique ability to grasp the entire picture, and as a result, he did not just give us new technology piece-by-piece, but rather he connected it to his vision of making life more enjoyable and fun for the whole family. Walt Disney made unprecedented contributions to art and pop culture (Finch 1995; Johnston and Thomas 1995). His energetic persistence in accomplishing goals is illustrated by his receiving over 950 awards including 48 Academy Awards and 7 Emmy Awards.

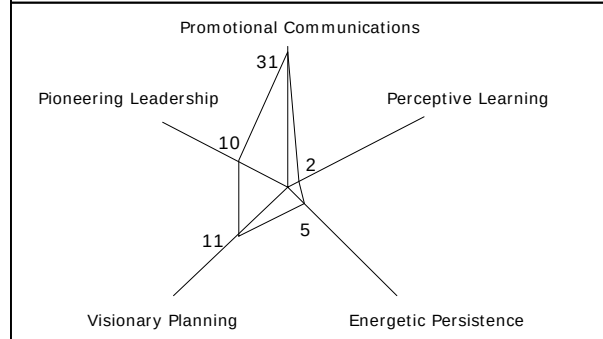
Colonel Tom Parker

The man who called himself Colonel Tom Parker is a controversial choice as a great marketer. He certainly made a mark on the world by managing the career of Elvis Presley to the heights of stardom, yet a bevy of novels written after his death have castigated him as little more than a con man who stole much of Presley’s fortune (Dickerson 2003; Nash 2003; O’Neal 1998; Vellenga and Farren 1988). But whether it was Presley’s talent or Parker’s magnificent sense of promotional timing, the fact is that the combination worked to perfection.

Parker seemed to have an uncanny ability to structure a compelling message and obtain the right level of media exposure to enhance Presley’s image. As a result, Elvis Presley became a hot commodity, the “King” of Rock ‘n’ Roll. These outstanding promotional communications skills were highlighted in the supporting comments provided by marketing scholars (Figure 3). Parker boosted Elvis’ career by negotiating contracts with the largest companies in records, music publishing, television, and stage shows. Parker made certain that Presley was never over-exposed; he withheld the star from performances, public appearances, and press conferences in such a way that market demand for Elvis never became overly saturated. On the other hand, he did not allow the media to forget about Elvis either. Even when Elvis was drafted and had to serve two years in the U.S. Army, Parker managed to stage publicity events and photos opportunities that kept the star’s awareness at the top of the public mind.

The criticism leveled at Parker is primarily based upon his shaky past as an illegal immigrant, dog catcher, and carnival-barker-turned-promoter, and a belief by many Elvis fans that rather than enhancing Elvis’ career, Parker actually held him back. Parker did illegally emigrate from Holland, changed his name to Colonel Tom Parker, and used his knack for promotional skills and “fast talking” to open the door to many moneymaking schemes. But he did represent legitimate entertainment legends like Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Gene Austin, and Tom Mix, before his relationship with Presley.

FIGURE 3
SPIDER GRAPH FOR COL. TOM PARKER



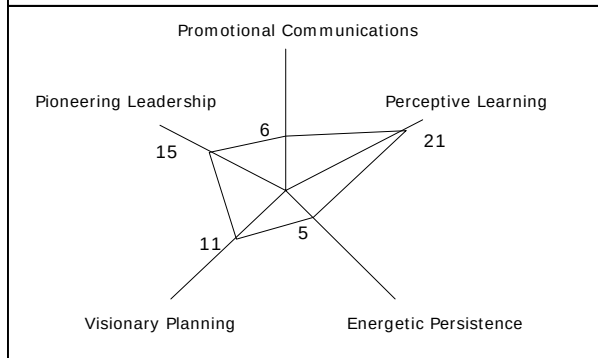
Henry Ford

While Henry Ford is usually remembered as the one who perfected mass production, it can be argued that his marketing instincts were his true genius, because he was able to recognize what others of his day could not: the main thing most consumers wanted in a car was affordability. When he sought to achieve affordability, he developed the assembly line approach and a whole host of lean manufacturing innovations that resulted in cost containment and efficiency (Levinson 2002).

As shown in Figure 4, Ford exhibits all five characteristics of greatness, but most especially perceptive learning. By 1893, he had developed his first gasoline-powered engine, and by 1896 he had built his first “horseless carriage. But Ford was not satisfied with the result, and continued to learn about the technology and its capabilities by developing a second model, then a third, and so on. His financial backers became exasperated because they wanted to introduce a product to the market and earn a return on their investment, but Ford insisted on waiting so that he could continue to improve its potential value for customers. Ford was convinced that the product should be an ordinary man’s utility instead of a rich man’s luxury (Ford 1988). Finally, after 15 years worth of learning-driven tinkering and development, the Ford Model T was announced for sale in 1908.

Ford then turned his attention to learning manufacturing methods, resulting in the development of approaches to standardization and mass production of every part (Brinkley 2003; Levinson 2002). Ford continued to dream about producing a reasonably priced, reliable, and efficient automobile. Driven to learn how to produce vehicles more efficiently, he was led to greater levels of mechanization. By 1910, when sales of the Model T really began to take off, Ford set the selling price at \$780 per car. Incredibly, because of his mastery of efficient manufacturing methods, he was able to cut the price by greater than 50 percent to \$360 in just four years. By 1914, the 13,000 employees of Ford Motor Company produced 268,000 vehicles; while the 66,350 employees of the other 299

FIGURE 4
SPIDER GRAPH FOR HENRY FORD



American auto companies produced only 287,000 vehicles. His learning of production methods had achieved a labor efficiency advantage of 5 to 1 over the typical competitor.

But he did not stop learning how to drive costs out of the product to create better value for his customers. By 1918, the company began construction of the world's largest industrial complex on the Rouge River in Dearborn. The plant incorporated all the raw materials needed to produce an automobile, and had its own steel mill, glass factory, rolling mills, forges, and foundries. Iron ore and coal were delivered directly to the plant via the Rouge River. He increased the number of buyers for his vehicles by paying his workers enough so that they could each afford his automobiles. Ford then turned his attention to distribution, and learning that business, much like politics, was controlled locally, he built a franchise system involving 7,000 dealers across the United States. By the late 1920's, the operations at Ford Motor Company were so vertically integrated that the company was completely self-sufficient. Ford owned rubber plantations in Brazil, a railroad, a fleet of ships, thousands of acres of timber, sixteen coal mines, and iron mines in Michigan and Minnesota.

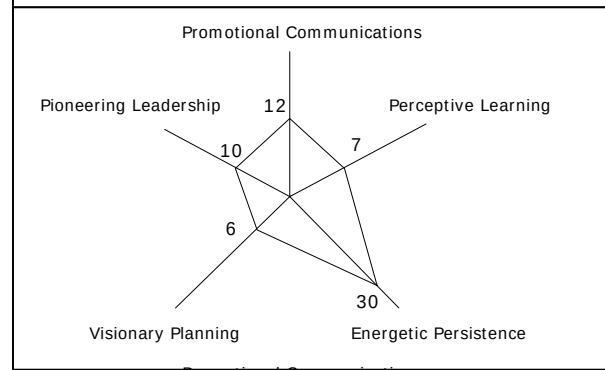
But there was a flaw in Ford's perceptual learning. He failed to recognize that consumer needs and wants change when conditions change. While he continued to learn how to make cars less expensive for the buying public, he missed the market shift to cars with more colorful and sleeker aesthetics. By the time the Ford Motor Company had recovered with the introduction of the Model A, the company had relinquished its market share lead to long-time rival General Motors, and has been fighting to regain that lost share ever since.

Philip Kotler

Philip Kotler is one of the marketing greats featured here because he personifies energetic persistence in marketing. His spider graph summarizes the types of com-

ments made to support his inclusion as a great marketer, and underscores a balanced portrayal of all factors plus considerable strength in energetic persistence (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5
SPIDER GRAPH FOR PHILIP KOTLER



To most marketing faculty, his productivity in writing, teaching, speaking, research and consulting is awe-inspiring. He is the author of twelve current marketing texts, including *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control*, which has gone into multiple editions and is the most widely used graduate-level marketing textbook worldwide (Kellogg 2002). Kotler has published over 100 academic journal articles, consulted for the top corporations in the world, won recognition from just about every academic marketing organization that presents awards, served as a board member to a wide variety of prestigious organizations, and delivered lectures to audiences across Europe, Asia, and South America (Kellogg 2002).

Kotler's skill is a high energy level and glue-like persistence, attributes our students could do well to emulate. His energetic persistence has resulted in numerous achievements and more important marketing awards than any other marketing academic. Through his efforts, Kotler has contributed a significant inventory of marketing ideas and concepts to the literature. Yet, at the same time he has developed a reputation as both a family-man, and a student-oriented professor because he takes the time to help make people feel at ease with him (Hekmat 1989).

DISCUSSION

Great marketers of our times share five common factors or "traits" that provide a solid foundation for their greatness. First, great marketers are visionary planners that create competitive advantage by focusing on their dreams, and developing the plans and organizations to accomplish them. Second, great marketers are pioneering leaders who seize innovative opportunities and exploit them before the competition can. Third, great marketers are highly talented promotional communicators, who are

able to attract attention and convince others as to the value of their products, services or plans. Fourth, great marketers are perceptive learners who continuously strive to enhance the ability of their organization to better satisfy consumer needs. Finally, great marketers display energetic persistence in everything they do. They seem to accomplish great things because of personal energy combined with staying power. Walton, Disney, Parker, Ford, and Kotler demonstrate these five traits in their professional lives.

Marketing educators can use discussion of these marketing icons in order to better illustrate course material. That is, these marketing practitioners provide tangible examples that students can “wrap their minds around.” Discussion of each of these marketing icons can help a student better grasp class content by putting a face with a concept. Educators could use mention of these marketers in the following manner.

Early on in the school term, instructors could describe each of these great marketers in an introduction lecture, making use of video tapes or DVD’s where available. Then, throughout the term, following lectures could reintroduce each marketing great at the appropriate time with assignments made to find information about these greats through Internet and library resources. That is, reference to these icons could be woven in throughout the term. For example, during the course of a marketing management course, when the topic of strategic planning is discussed, reference can be made to Sam Walton for his ability to develop a plan based on a strategic vision of the future and what he wanted his organization to achieve. When new-product development or strategies based on innovation are discussed, Walt Disney provides the perfect example of how to achieve success.

Of course, any discussion of promotions or communications become more concrete when mentioned along with the brilliance of Colonel Tom Parker. Lectures on the use of feedback loops or the study of past strategies and trends for strategic identification or refinement could discuss Henry Ford’s perceptive learning for the implementation of, or adjustment of, the strategic focus of an organization. Finally, Philip Kotler could be mentioned to add a face to how a leader can achieve greatness for an organization. This is though the ability to always strive to succeed and the persistence to commit to a strategy long enough to see it thorough to full implementation. Also, Kotler can be a very tangible example in a course using one of his authored texts.

Additionally, other marketing practitioners deemed appropriate by the instructor could also be used to illustrate course material. The point is to use people rather than corporations in order to put a face on great marketing practice just as it is done for physics, astronomy, and philosophy (to name but a few). Students then have role models to aspire to emulate.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There is a limitation to this study that needs to be mentioned. The data were collected by asking the opinions of marketing academics. Had the opinions of marketing practitioners also been sought, a different set of nominees might have been offered. For instance, practitioners might not have also mentioned a marketing academic (Philip Kotler) as a choice . . . but they might have. One can not say for certain.

This study raises four questions for further consideration and research. First, the great marketers nominated in this study seem to possess all five characteristics to some degree, but at the same time they own an emphasis in one or two areas. Further research is needed to understand if this general observation can be used as a general principle. Second, many of the great marketers identified by our survey do not have formal marketing education. Additional inquiry is needed to consider the role and effectiveness of current marketing education in the development of great marketers. Third, with the inclusion of Parker on the list, the question arises as to whether great marketers must be ethical marketers. Fourth, there was a lack of diversity represented in the list of great marketers that the survey generated, and more work is needed to identify and promote great marketer role models that are women and minorities.

CONCLUSION

This study raises two implications for marketing educators. First, if we truly wish to foster the development of marketing greatness in our students, we should include some presentation in our classes of the factors shared by great marketers, and at the same time, we should introduce selected great marketers that can serve as role models for our students. Marketing text authors could help by presenting a discussion of great marketers and their common characteristics in the marketing implementation chapter of their text. Class assignments could be made that require students to study a great marketer’s life and report to their classmates how that marketer illustrates one or more of the five factors of greatness. Marketing executives could be invited to campus to speak on how their careers illustrate these factors. Faculty members can identify those marketers that have served as role models for them, and elaborate on the connections between personal characteristics and successful performance for students. Herein, we have presented a model that could be used to achieve these objectives in marketing courses.

Secondly, if we as academicians wish to achieve marketing greatness in our careers, we should ask ourselves how we live up to the characteristics of greatness represented by the five factors. Do we nurture our own abilities to deliver greatness in the classroom by planning,

pioneering, promoting, learning, and energetic persistence? Do we take steps to gain external assessments as to how well we are doing in this regard? Our striving to grow in competence relative to these factors of greatness will

likely enhance our personal recognition, extend our influence beyond the marketing discipline, and enable us to positively influence those people around us who need our guidance and help.

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