INCORPORATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO
THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This article defines service learning as a teaching pedagogy in higher education and discusses its importance to students, businesses, faculty and institutions of higher education. Service learning is linked to a school of business mission statement, and the premise for why service learning should be part of the business curriculum and how can it be incorporated into business courses is presented.

Incorporating Service Learning into the Business Curriculum

Introduction

We remember . . .
10% of what we hear
15% of what we see
20% of what we hear and see
60% of what we do
80% of what we do with active reflection
90% of what we teach.
(Phillips, 1984)

Today, businesses are discovering the importance of taking a proactive interest in community concerns. Giving back to communities by contributing to them and the surrounding areas is the way many organizations do business. Starbucks, for example, lists community participation as a guiding principle of their corporate mission, and the initiative has been so successful that service is viewed as part of the corporate culture. Partnering with communities and involving employees as decision-makers, volunteers and leaders, is a major goal of the organization (http://www.starbucks.com). The belief that business is about people is the bedrock of many companies. Corporate responsibility is seen as the path to success. In an era when one business may be indistinguishable from another, the positive gains that accrue from corporate service can provide a sustainable competitive advantage. The New York Times, Proctor and Gamble, Dillards, GE, Sears and numerous other corporations have integrated service into their strategic plans (http://www.socialfunds.com/news/article.cgi/article805.html).

In educational arenas, service learning approaches enhance student preparation for the new challenges of today's business world by helping students to understand a variety of issues such as diversity, ethics, social responsibility, illiteracy, globalization, and the digital divide. Participants in service learning discover that service and learning outside the classroom are vital to their individual and professional development, and gain a sense of social responsibility essential for our future business and community leaders (http://www.cns.gov/; http://www.state.ar.us/dhs/adov/ns_programs.html; Tucker, et. al., 1998).

The term service-learning refers to a teaching pedagogy (a) under which students learn and develop through active participation in organized service experiences that meet business community needs; (b) that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the service activity; and (c) that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities. Thus, service learning enhances what is taught in higher education by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the business arena and assisting students in the development of lifelong career and professional/social skills. Service learning is a powerful educational experience where interests mesh with information, values and beliefs are formed, and action results (Sawyer 1991).

History of Service Learning. The idea of integrating service experiences into academic curricula and connecting schools with businesses, agencies and neighborhoods is nothing new. The roots of service in the U.S. can be documented back to 1830 when de Tocqueville first recorded observations of service activity in Democracy in America. He called these acts "habits of the heart" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1986, Preface, p. vii). Today, the term "habits of the heart" has been revived to remind us that a fundamental part of business and our society as a whole rests on people working together and helping one another. In the early 1980s, many educational leaders began to lobby for increased involvement of students in service activities, citing the need for students to not only understand their rights as individuals but their responsibilities toward one another. In addition, proponents of service learning saw a need in education to create a strong connection between students and their communities (Boyer 1987a).

Community service refers to a wide variety of volunteer work done in the community. Although it may provide learning experiences for volunteers, it is typically not part of a formal educational curriculum. In contrast, service learning is a special form of community service in which traditional course work is linked with paid/non-paid experiences in the community. It is planned and supervised by an academic department or faculty member as an integral part of a course (Gray, Ondaatje, and Zakaras 1999; Kraft 1996). Thus, the shift from traditional community service to service learning occurs when there is a specific connection made between service and learning opportunities (Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform,1993). The dimension of learning adds depth to students' experiences and helps promote their professional, personal and social development. In today's Enron, WorldCom and dot.com crises, service learning may provide the vehicle for fostering a sense of social responsibility, ethics and community among our students. Service learning encourages students to understand the way their business community functions, develops the capacity to see issues from a broad perspective, helps students see the relationship between private rights/interests and those of the public good, and fosters an ethic of service and volunteerism which is critical for community survival.

Service learning has its roots in experiential education. Early educational philosophers stressed the importance of integrating learning experiences into the curriculum to provide a framework for learning. Dewey (cited in Davis, Maher, and Noddings 1990) believed that all curriculum should be generated out of social situations; Tyler (1949) maintained that learning occurs through the active participation of the student; and Taba (1962) contributed an in-depth approach to producing curriculum that would actively engage students in learning. A contemporary variation on this theme is constructivist theory which suggests the teacher's role should not be one of directing, but rather of guiding student activity, modeling behavior, and providing examples (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989).

Benefits of Service Learning

Service learning offers a wide variety of benefits to students, faculty/institutions of higher learning and the community. Table 1 presents an overview of some major types of service learning outcomes.

Students. For students, research (Markus, et. al., 1993; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Eyler, et. al., 1997) supports the claims that (1) service-learning improves academic achievement across a variety of disciplines; (2) service connected to specific curricular content can enhance the learning of the course content; (3) service learning has a positive impact on students' personal, social and cognitive outcomes; (4) participation in a service learning program improves interaction between faculty and students which typically has a positive impact on student learning; and (5) service learning enhances students' beliefs in their personal efficacy, and can be a predictor in their professional development.

Business service learning sensitizes students to the challenge of working with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and ages. It exposes them to working under time constraints and encourages them to address business-related problems. It also creates lasting bonds between students and local communities, as well as establishing relationships between schools and community organizations (Checkoway, 1996). Service learning also fosters pre-employment skills and job readiness. It is consistent with outcome-based education in that it emphasizes a business/community-based approach. Through service placements in public and private, profit and non-profit sectors of the business community, students gain a competitive advantage in the workforce (Silcox, 1995). Specific service benefits/opportunities for students are presented in Appendix A.

Faculty/School/Institution. For faculty, service learning can revitalize teaching efforts, create/improve business community connections, and add to their research agenda. For institutions of higher education, service learning not only fulfills the school's/institution's mission, but also reinforces the concepts integrated throughout the school's/university's strategic plan. Teaching and advising, research and scholarship, outreach, and the university community can all be enhanced through student and faculty involvement in service learning. Specific benefits/opportunities for faculty and institutions of higher education are presented in Appendix B.

Community. Service learning programs in higher education also strengthen relationships between the institutions and the communities they serve. Business, agency and community organization sponsors play a central role in student learning. Their investment is returned through student service contributions, long-term relationships with the university, and an increased awareness of university programs and issues. Service learning also prepares tomorrow's workforce today, thus ensuring that communities will have the needed human resources at their disposal when needed. In addition, service learning bridges the gap between theory and reality. In the process of doing so, it fosters a sense of responsible citizenship and compassion that can not be achieved in the classroom. Specific benefits/opportunities that accrue to communities are presented in Appendix C.

Table 1

An Overview of
Service Learning Outcomes

Students	Schools	Communities
Personal Growth and Development • Self-esteem • Personal efficacy and sense of responsibility • Ethical/Moral development and reinforced values and beliefs • Exploration of new roles, identities, and interests • Willingness to take risks and accept new challenges Intellectual Development and Academic Learning • Basic skills including oral and written communication, expressing ideas, conducting research, learning about careers, reading, and calculating • Higher-level thinking skills, such as problem-solving, decision-making and critical thinking	• Paradigm shift-teachers as coaches and facilitators; students responsible for their own learning • Motivated learners engaged in authentic and significant work • Cooperative learning environment • Teachers as reflective practitioners engaged in planning, curriculum development, and inquiry • Collaborative decision making among administrators, faculty, , students, and community members • Positive academic climate • Community involvement, resources, and support in the educational process	• Valuable service to meet direct human, business, educational, health, and environmental needs • Schools as resources Schools/teacher/student teams serving as researchers and resources in problem-solving and community development • Empowerment School/community partnerships to assess, plan, and collaboratively meet needs • Citizenship Students become active stakeholders in the community • Infusion of innovation toward improving the institutional practices of schools and communities • Understanding and

• Skills and issues specific to degree program and service experience • Motivation to learn • Learning skills, including observation, inquiry, and application of knowledge • Insight, judgment, and understanding Social Growth and Development • Social responsibility, corporate responsibility and concern for others • Business efficacy • Civic participation • Knowledge and exploration of careers • Understanding and appreciation of, and ability to relate to, people from a wide range of backgrounds and life situations (Conrad and Hedin, 1989)		appreciation of diversity -across generations, cultures, perspectives, and abilities

Service Learning as Part of the Business Curriculum

Service learning in higher education is widely advocated as a method for advancing civic awareness and citizen responsibility and for creating a connection between students and the organizations with which these students will eventually find employment. Service learning is promoted by academic, professional, and business leaders through such organizations as Campus Compact, American Association for Higher Education, Commission on Civic Renewal, and Corporation for National and Community Service (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999). In some institutions of higher learning, students can obtain a certificate or degree in service (e.g., Tufts University) (Zernike 2000). A recent report (Shumer & Cook, 1999) reports that nearly two million students participate in service learning at four-year public and private institutions of higher education.

The rationale for incorporating service learning into the business curriculum is simple -- students don't learn by simply memorizing knowledge, but by doing projects in which the knowledge is applied. More than any other academic program of instruction, the business school's very mission is enmeshed with a commitment to interact with and improve the business communities that surround the campus.

In reviewing business mission statements from B-schools whose primary focus is on teaching, several common threads were identified. In many cases, the primary mission was defined as providing intellectual foundations to support a lifelong learning process. Other common threads can be summarized as follows: Teaching quality and currency of the subject matter can best be maintained through ongoing interaction with peers and the business community… Students are encouraged to participate actively in the learning process…The business school aspires to prepare its graduates for personal and professional success in an evolving global environment. In order to achieve these goals, business schools must continually find ways to allow students to learn by practical application. Internships may be the ultimate application of classroom knowledge, but this may be impractical for all students as well as for the business school. Thus, other avenues for providing students with the opportunity to learn by application must be sought. Service learning presents a viable solution.

A study sponsored by AACSB raised the issue that while business students may have the required analytical skills for future business jobs, they may be insensitive to other factors in the business environment. Researchers cited a need to prepare students to deal more effectively with the external environments of business. The recommendation was that business faculty must ensure that students gain exposure to a wider range of issues than is typical of today's business graduate. Specifically, business students must improve in areas of social awareness and accountability (http://www.aacsb.edu).

Most business schools are also emphasizing the need to integrate technology into the classroom. Unfortunately, business schools frequently do not have access to industry-related software. Service learning can provide the opportunity for students to apply and develop technical skills in a real-life setting with cutting-edge software packages. Another emphasis of many business schools is creating venues for application of knowledge. Service learning can provide students with multiple opportunities to use what they have learned in the classroom in a "real world" setting. Furthermore, engaging students in service learning teaches the business student to be proactive rather than reactive, thus fulfilling the school's commitment to serve the community at large.

Placement of students into jobs that are directly related to the candidate's degree program is a growing challenge for many B-schools. Today, virtually all employers report the desire to hire employees with previous experience.   The service learning component will provide business students with this much-needed experience, thus increasing the likelihood that they will obtain work in their chosen field.

AACSB-International also emphasizes the need for business students to gain exposure to the growing importance of cultural and demographic factors in conducting business. Most employers will agree that understanding, accepting, and valuing a diverse workforce is critical for today's business graduate. Service learning can increase student exposure to numerous aspects of cultural diversity, thus enhancing student learning about the value of diversity in the work place. Service learning also provides the business student with hands-on experience in unstructured problem solving, critical thinking and decision making under uncertainty.

The primary value of service learning, however, lies in enhanced student learning. Service learning makes academic study immediate and relevant for the business student while meeting the broader goals of the business school and the university. Furthermore, it expands the knowledge base of the business student not only through academic rigor, but also through professional, moral and social development. Well-planned business service learning, tied directly to a specific field of study, provides a context for service education with a solid academic foundation. Studies suggest that students who participate in service learning gain a more sophisticated understanding of processes and develop more positive attitudes about the importance of influencing their environment than do students who do not participate (Eyler & Halteman, 1981; Giles & Eyler 1994). In addition, service learning participants are reported to have achieved greater gains in issue identification skills and participation skills than are non-service students (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997).

How should the service learning component be applied? Should service learning courses be voluntary or should students be required to participate for a semester as a requirement for graduation? Research suggests that when service is not required, participants typically come from among students with highly educated parents, students who are already active in school, females, whites, and students who are especially encouraged by instructors to serve (Eyler, Giles, and Braxton 1997; Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1997; Kraft 1996; Myers-Lipton 1994; Niemi, Hepburn, and Chapman 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). This raises the question of whether students who are mandated to participate in service activities will actually learn from the experience. Research (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) suggests that simply asking all students to become active in service learning is often enough to get them to participate. Furthermore, whether the service component is mandatory or voluntary, most students report a high level of learning and satisfaction with the experience.

Incorporating Service Learning into the Business Curriculum

Although service learning has been integrated into numerous academic curriculums, many schools of business have been slow to incorporate this hands-on form of education. To be most effective, service learning in business must be structured into the curriculum to relate specifically to course objectives. This means that experiences must be planned to enhance reading, lectures, and classroom discussion. The service learning experience should also incorporate both a written and oral component for purposes of sharing the experience with others and providing the opportunity for the business student to reflect on the experience. Research (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000) indicates that the most effective service learning efforts are those that: 1) have well-articulated goals related to the course content; 2) are of long enough duration for students to develop communication and working relationships with people in the businesses where they work and to feel ownership for the projects they work on;

and 3) provide ample opportunities for reflection on the learning experience so it relates to accompanying business course work.

The integration of service learning into the business curriculum can range from a minor component of a course to a requirement for graduation. Business schools must opt for the format that gives students and faculty adequate flexibility in achieving course objectives, student development, and business community needs. If the school chooses to elect service as a minor component, the service experience can simply be integrated into existing courses, or the school may consider offering a course as a four-credit option. At the other extreme, the school may consider integrating the service component as a major requirement for students. In this case, the options might include a separate course in service, a semester-long project or a required internship. Common to any of these options would be the requirement of a major form of analysis of a problem faced by a participating business. This requirement could be completed by individuals or teams depending on the amount of work involved. Whether the service learning is a major or minor component, the business student must have identifiable objectives and should be required to share the experience in both written and oral format. Examples of possible business service learning projects are presented in Appendix D.

The incorporation of service learning in business school curricula emphasizes the increasing importance of service in business (Tucker et. al, 1998). Today, major companies (e.g., Hewlett Packard, Ben &Jerry's, The Body Shop, Levi Straus, Helene Curtis, Pillsbury Co., and General Electric) have incorporated a service component into their corporate strategy and culture (Tucker et. al, 1998). Service learning allows business students to gain a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of their chosen discipline, and an increased sense of responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). From the business perspective, service learning brings students into direct contact with real decision-makers and clarifies the importance of service learning activities.

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Appendix A
Benefits to Students

Specific benefits of service learning for students include the opportunity to:

- Explore majors and careers.
- Build resumes.
- Gain valuable work experience.
- Learn new skills.
- Gain a better understanding of what is presented in the classroom.
- Improve student chances of getting a job.
- Learn things that benefit the student for the rest of his/her life.
- Improve self-esteem.
- Develop a sense of personal satisfaction.
- Meet new people, make new friends, and make contacts.
- Gain administrative, financial planning, and management experience.
- Improve problem solving, critical thinking, oral and written communication skills.
- Enhance communication with different populations.

- Define community issues at a broad level.
- Develop initiative, independent reasoning and independent learning.
- Understand the relationship between theory and practice.
- Develop organizational skills that transfer to many occupations.
- Explore values and ethical issues.
- Develop a habit of critical reflection on experiences, which enhances learning.
- Gain more respect for and exposure to different cultures and socioeconomic conditions.
- Improve higher-level thinking skills (problem solving, critical thinking).
- Enhance skills learned from experience (to observe, ask questions, apply knowledge).
- Improve motivation to learn and retention of knowledge.
- Promote insight, judgment, understanding -- skills that can not be explained in a textbook or lecture but that may be critically important to success on the job.
- Promote social responsibility and concern for the welfare of others.
- Gain knowledge and exploration of careers.
- Understand and appreciate diversity in the work place.
- Network in the business community.

Appendix B
Benefits to Faculty/Universities

Benefits of service learning to the faculty include the opportunity to:

- Engage students in active rather than passive learning.
- Provide real life experiences related to topics discussed in class.
- Help students understand social and civic responsibility.
- Create more lively class discussions and increased student participation.
- Increase participant retention of course material.
- Increase student awareness of community and "real world" issues.
- Create innovative approaches to classroom instruction.
- Enhance opportunities for research and publication.
- Greater faculty awareness of community issues.
- Synthesis of community outreach with academic experience.
- Provide content and skills directly related to course learning.
- Improve motivation to learn and retention of knowledge.
- Create added resource to draw on for major or minor projects.
- Helps build classroom community
- Establishes a network with people in the community

Benefits of service learning to the school includes:

- Paradigm shift - teachers as coaches and facilitators; student responsibility for their own learning.
- Motivated learners engaged in authentic and significant work. Cooperative learning environment.

- Teachers as reflective practitioners engaged in planning, curriculum development, and inquiry.
- Collaborative decision-making among administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members.
- Positive, healthy, and caring school climate.
- Community involvement resources, and support in the educational process.
- Supplements the educational experience being provided by the University
- Allows the University to give back to the community through its students
- Provides good public relations
- Provides an opportunity for the community to view the University as a resource
- Can establish connections for other University programs

Appendix C
Benefits to Community

Major benefits service-learning provides to the community include:

- Meeting some of the human services resource needs in the community.
- Increasing the probability that students will become responsible citizens upon graduation.
- Providing businesses and with agencies resources for problem solving.
- Providing a link to the university by involving the community in the student's learning process.
- Fostering collaboration on projects or grants.
- Providing meaningful services to the community creates opportunities for community agencies to participate in student learning.
- Building community awareness of college programs and services.
- Valuable service to meet direct human, educational, health and environmental needs.
- Schools as resources - School/teacher/student teams serving as researchers and resources in problem-solving and community development.
- Empowerment - School/community partnerships to assess, plan, and collaboratively meet needs.
- Citizenship - Students become active stakeholders in the community.
- Infusion of ideas for improving the institutional practices of schools and communities.
- Understanding and appreciation of diversity - across generations, cultures, perspectives, and abilities.
- Improving school-community relationships.
- Exposing and teaching communities about emerging generations of students.
- Helping establish access and connections to other resources available at the University.
- Helping to break down stereotypes that the community has about students.
- Adding youth and enthusiasm to a service program/project.
- Providing an opportunity for a community to shape students' values and to prepare students for community participation after college.
- Access to university resources.
- Positive relationship opportunities with the university.
- Awareness-building of community issues, agencies and constituents.
- Opportunities to contribute to the educational process.

- Affordable access to professional development.
- Short- and long-term solutions to pressing community needs

Appendix D

Suggestions for Service Learning Projects Related to Business Course Content

- Entrepreneurship/strategy - students develop business plans for projects to benefit low-income communities.
- Management - students assist in the start-up of a new business.
- Economics - students develop and teach an economics seminar for middle/high school students.
- Management information systems - students create a web site for a small business; track clients for an area agency.
- Accounting - students document and analyze operational procedures (purchasing, accounts payable, payroll, etc.) for participating organizations.
- Business information systems - students teach low-income residents how to keyboard.
- Business policy - students apply general management skills to challenges faced by the American Red Cross in systematizing policies for blood donations and distribution.
- Computer applications - students design web pages for faculty and departments on campus.
- Managerial communication - students practice communication skills by interacting with and presenting reports to nonprofit agency.