

# Chapter 15

## Technology in Marketing Education: Insights from Sales Training

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### ABSTRACT

*Company training programs provide insights for university classrooms, particularly those in schools and colleges of business. This research shows an increase in usage of technology based training among successful firms, but it is not growing as quickly as consumer use of self-service technologies because some firm goals require more personal training modes. The present findings regarding business adoption of training technology are consistent with consumer research that suggests satisfaction increases with experience in use. Also, selected technology must be congruent with learning goals—technological tools are more effective when students are learning related material—and results of training suggest increased efficacy when this is true. In this regard, university learning environments focused on business should utilize technology as appropriate to learning goals, but should not gratuitously replace traditional classroom learning activities.*

### INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that technology is becoming increasingly important as it impacts greater portions of their time; both at work and at home. Certainly the use of technology is increasing among households – for instance, findings from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that online consumer retail purchases increased by 22.0% as

compared to overall consumer retail purchases, which increased by only 5.4% during the most recent year for which complete data are available (*E-Stats*, 2008). Building on the idea that comfort levels with online environments are increasing, Shin and Kim (2008) suggest that as consumers use the Internet more, it becomes more enjoyable to them. It may even offer network externalities, in that as online social networking sites become

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more popular, they are increasingly desirable to join. In regard to classroom environments preferred by student consumers, Gibson, Harris, and Colaric (2008) find that technology based learning improves with greater acceptance of technology. But, is the desirability of technology in education growing as it is among consumers more generally? For schools and colleges of business, one place to look for answers is in the companies where students are preparing to work. The present research considers the use of technology in education, from the point of view of decision makers at large firms who must determine how to provide training for employees. Their decisions and satisfaction with learning outcomes are addressed.

Many firms provide training to employees, and as their industries change more rapidly, these educational experiences must also change to keep pace and allow employees to retain an edge in the marketplace. To assess technology's contribution to a relevant learning experience, this research examines sales force training within representative samples of Fortune 500 firms. (The Fortune 500 was selected for study because large firms tend to provide in-house training for employees, whereas smaller firms tend to outsource this activity.) Because the study design observes representative samples of this specific population in 2001 and in 2006, changes in use of technology can be measured between these two points in time. Some of the findings are fairly predictable (for instance, the share of firms using technology as a replacement for traditional classroom based teaching methods increased by 20% over the five-year period) whereas others are surprising (companies continue to report that well over half of their training is in person and classroom based).

## **BACKGROUND**

To position the present study relative to research regarding technology use in learning situations, relevant literature is reviewed and research ques-

tions are developed. Technology is clearly gaining use in daily lives of consumers, as evidenced by the growing body of research in service marketing that considers the impact of the availability of self-service technology on customer buy-in and satisfaction. Therefore, use of technology and its acceptance by consumers is examined first. Next, research on technology use in specific situations where customers are students is discussed, particularly the role of technology in university based marketing education. Finally, the use of technology in corporate training is reviewed. Although still for the purpose of education, the latter involves moving from the consumer learning situation to the business learning environment. Following the conceptual development, research questions are presented to extend published work.

## **Technology in Service Marketing**

Consumer acceptance of self-service technologies is increasing rapidly, as noted above. Seminal work by Davis (1989) and by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) describes a measurement tool for investigating the impact of consumer acceptance on technology adoption. The technology acceptance model (TAM), developed and tested in the context of adoption of software tools, has since been applied to numerous other services to describe how information technology and self-service technologies may improve customer experiences and outcomes. Findings suggest that whereas ease of use may be a factor in initial adoption of technology, its perceived usefulness is crucial to both initial implementation and sustained usage.

Koufaris (2002) considers the adoption of technology by retail consumers who choose to shop online. The TAM applies to this self-service situation, and results are similar to those of Davis et al. (1989) in that perceived usefulness is found to be a significant predictor of technology adoption and continued use; ease of use, although positive, is not significant. Similar results are

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