

Technology

Virtual Class Is in Session

Although the phrase “virtual classroom” has become part of the business school vernacular, gathering students from different schools into a single online class is still more the exception than the rule. That might soon change, however. During the next two academic years, three graduate schools of business—the Haas School of Business at the University of California-Berkeley, the Darden School at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and the University of Michigan Business School in Ann Arbor—will bring together their MBA students in a virtual classroom.

The institutions are taking advantage of Internet and online video technology to offer one course each in the virtual classroom. The courses

will be available to MBA students at all three business schools. This fall, Darden professor Jeanne Liedtka is teaching a consulting course to approximately 20 students each from Darden, Michigan, and Haas. In the spring, Terry Odean, assistant professor at the Haas School, will teach behavioral finance. The course from the University of Michigan, which will be offered in the fall of 2003, has yet to be determined.

Students at each site will work on team projects, which will be presented to their counterparts at the other schools via online video presentations, Professor Liedtka explains. “We also will organize teams with participants from all three locations. The teams will utilize the Web to work together and make their presentations from three separate sites,” she added.

The collaboration between these three business schools may soon become routine in business education, says Andrew Shogan, associate dean of instruction at the Haas School. “These joint courses may be a window into the future of management education,” he says, “a future in which schools regularly team or co-brand to offer their best courses to students and executives who are located at multiple sites around the world.”

E-Marketplace Plagued with Dangerous Complacency

Now that the bubble has burst on the dot-com economy, businesses have gone from e-commerce excitement to “massive complacency,” according to a study from the United Kingdom’s Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford. Conducted by Steve New, “Understanding the E-marketplace” was commissioned by Achilles Group, a company that has offices in Europe and South America and provides online and supplier services to companies worldwide.

In the study, New analyzed existing data on e-commerce and looked at the services and strategies of more than 600 B2B marketplaces. He also sent a survey that generated 240 usable replies and conducted follow-up phone interviews with a dozen of these companies.

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“Understanding the E-Marketplace,” a study from the Saïd Business School that surveyed 240 companies, reveals that while more than 55 percent of companies expected online buying and selling to cause their suppliers’ prices to decline, more than 65 percent believed their own prices would remain unaffected.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

ImagePro 9058 Large Venue Projector

If your classroom presentations need a bit more visual punch, Dukane Corporation of St. Charles, Illinois, has introduced a new projector to the market, the ImagePro 9058. Offering 5800 lumens of light, the ImagePro is a high-brightness LCD projector designed



specifically for large-scale applications in auditoriums, conference rooms, or other areas where a large, bright data/video image is required. It accommodates computer or video image display with multiple inputs and various control methods, and offers an image resolution of 1280 x 1024 pixels and power zoom, among other features. It can display video signals such as composite, S-video, and all types of high-definition TV (HDTV). The 9058 comes with a five-year warranty and has a list price of \$27,995. Visit www.dukane.com or call 630-584-2300 for more information.

FEWER THAN 35 PERCENT OF COMPANIES SURVEYED HAVE AN ONLINE CATALOG, AND JUST MORE THAN 20 PERCENT USE THE INTERNET TO GENERATE ORDERS FROM CUSTOMERS.



New found that while more than 80 percent of companies are using the Internet for e-mail communication, most are still reluctant to embrace the Internet fully for its capabilities in online databases, e-commerce, customer service, and supply chain management. Fewer than 35 percent of companies surveyed have an online catalog, and just more than 20 percent use the Internet to generate orders from customers. “While B2B still presents many opportunities for all types of organizations, there is a danger that they will be missed,” stresses New.

“Unrealistic hype has been replaced by dangerous complacency.” Three aspects of online buying and selling stand out, writes New in his study. First, even large organizations still follow procedures that don’t work in the Internet age, such as relying too heavily on traditional benchmarks to measure success or underestimating the costs of implementation. Second, firms still find it difficult to integrate online systems with their existing computerized systems. Finally, the culture within many companies is still resistant to conversion to Internet strategies—some organizations still find the Internet “an unwelcome intrusion on the status quo” in the relationships they have with their customers and suppliers. “One interpretation of these results seems to be that there is per-

haps an unwarranted degree of optimism—and maybe even complacency—in the responding firms,” New notes in the study. “An alternative reading, however, suggests that organizations will increasingly be divided into victors and victims in the E-marketspace. For firms who take the new opportunities seriously, it might well mean that they can improve their position in the supply chain in both directions. For firms who neglect the new agenda, there could be an increasing squeeze on profitability and power.” Visit www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/e-market space/to download the full report.

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In July 2002, the revenue generated by online purchases increased **26 percent** over July 2001. According to Internet research firm comScore Networks Inc., online sales, excluding auctions, totaled \$6 billion in July. Travel-related purchases were up 32 percent, and computer hardware sales were up 30 percent. By 2005, analysts expect annual online sales revenues to top **\$6.3 trillion**.

NEWSBYTES

■ **E-LEARNING, YES; CRM, NO**

A recent study by Nucleus Research Inc., a research firm based in Wellesley, Massachusetts, has found that the return on investments in technology can be a mixed bag. On one hand, companies that make moderate investments in technology for e-learning systems do see a return on their money—they spend less on areas such as travel, human resources, and customer support. However, those savings are not realized when companies invest in customer relationship management (CRM) technology. Here, the study found that companies often overspend on the technology; they often find that their

needs change by the time the systems are implemented; and they are hindered by salespeople who are unwilling to share their client information with other divisions on a CRM network.

■ **JAVASCRIPT WITH YOUR JAVA**

Coffee powerhouse Starbucks, based in Seattle, Washington, now offers high-speed Internet access at 1,200 locations. The company hopes the launch of the Internet cafes will both position the company in the computer age and, not surprisingly, sell more coffee, Starbucks



chairman Howard Schultz told Reuters. Java drinkers can pay \$12 per hour for impromptu Internet sessions. More serious users can pay \$29.95 per month for unlimited local access or \$49.95 per month for unlimited nationwide access.

■ **NEW TECH CENTER FOR MICROSOFT**

In September, Microsoft held a grand opening ceremony for its new Microsoft Innovation & Technology Conference Center in Reston, Virginia. The \$25 million facility boasts the latest in highly secure computing and telecommunications equipment. Microsoft’s goal for the building and its site near Washington, D.C., is to secure a contract with the U.S. government for its domestic security initiatives. **☑**