

My Top 17 Tips for Teaching Marketing

Great Tips and Ideas for Marketing Educators



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TIP 1

Find Your Lane

Let me say this straight out of the gate – **there is no one best way to teach marketing** – you need to develop your teaching approach according to your own style and personality.

If you are reviewing this teaching tips guide in the hope of finding an exact blueprint that you can copy for effective teaching, I'm sorry that I will disappoint you.



Although **these teaching tips and ideas should prove quite helpful**, and hopefully improve your teaching – you still need to be you and **figure out what works best for you in the classroom**.

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If you watch talent reality shows, the judges will often say to a contestant, ***“You need to find your lane”***.

This means that they have to find their style of singing to be successful in the competition, rather than copying a famous celebrity.

And that’s the same challenge that we have as marketing educators. We need to find out:
What’s our style? What approach works best for us?



That’s what I did over my teaching journey across my 1,800 or so university lectures.

And much of my teaching style was **developed by trial and error** to find out what works best for me and my students and what doesn’t. We are all different.

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TIP 2

Stick to the 15-Minute Rule

The 15-minute rule is something I learned early on in my teaching career when I was attending a seminar on how to be an effective corporate trainer.



The 15-minute rule is simple:

***Do Not Talk for More than 15
Minutes at a Time***

This is the maximum time that you should expect your students to sit and listen to a “lecture”.

Your teaching cannot be simply continuous one-way communication, no matter how entertaining you may be as an educator.


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When following this rule, you will need to **structure your lectures and classes into chunks**.

For example, 10-15 minutes of teaching/talking, followed by 5-15 minutes (or more) of an activity and interaction, perhaps followed by video – and then repeat.



In a two-hour lecture (or class), **you should only have four main “chunks” of related theory and activities.**

This is a **more effective way of teaching** because you are reaching more students through **their preferred learning styles**, which are usually:

- listening,
- reading,
- interacting, and
- doing

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TIP 3

Add Value to the Textbook

Early on in my teaching career, for some unknown reason looking back, I believed that it was my prime goal to “*interpret and explain*” the marketing textbook to the students.

In many ways, I simply became an “*Audible*” version of the textbook. This is clearly NOT adding any value.

Many students already have the textbook.

They can read and reread it until it makes sense to them.

And most textbooks have examples and cases to help with their explanations.



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Granted, some textbooks are better than others and some textbooks are a bit awkward in their communication and sometimes they do need a little help.

But simply to be another variation of the textbook is pointless. As an educator, **you need to “add value” to the material.** Your job is not to repeat the textbook, especially almost word-for-word.

And how do we do that?

- 
- A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a pen and writing in a notebook. The notebook is open, and the pen is in the process of writing on the page. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a desk or table.
- Using our own experiences
 - Using your student's knowledge
 - Video examples
 - Mini case studies
 - Activities from Great Ideas
 - EdTech tools
 - In-class discussions
 - And all these teaching tips

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TIP 4

Get Real AND Get Hypothetical

Firstly, **you need to get real** – that's very important when teaching marketing.

Straight marketing theory can sometimes be a little dull, especially if it is relentlessly delivered. As we know, marketing is a discipline that is **best taught from examples and cases.**



And the best thing is that **your students are all consumers.**

They go shopping, they buy products, they choose brands, and they had seen 100,000's of ads.

They are expert consumers, ready to analyze real-world marketing situations.

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But secondly, you also **need to get hypothetical**.

Although this is the opposite of getting real, it is also very important.

What this means is that we **construct activities and exercises around hypothetical businesses**.

“But why?” I hear you ask...

The reason is that hypothetical firms are not internet researchable. This means that **students cannot simply Google what happened** for their answer.

With hypothetical exercises, there isn't a real company to research, and students have to analyze, think, and work through the activity themselves.

This approach is **more effective for their future marketing careers**, where they will be exposed to unfamiliar and usual and unknown situations.

So, by getting hypothetical, you are getting your students ready for the real world!

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TIP 5

Use Humor, or Maybe Not

One of the teaching tips that you often read about is to use humor.

However, using humor **DEPENDS** on **whether it fits with your teaching style and whether it works for you.**

If it does, then use humor – but if it doesn't, don't use humor **just be personable and friendly.**

In my teaching, I felt comfortable using humor in classes, but my humor style was most **often self-deprecating**, where I was the butt of the joke, rather than any student.

For example, I would draw upon my array of bad marketing decisions from my corporate marketing experience.



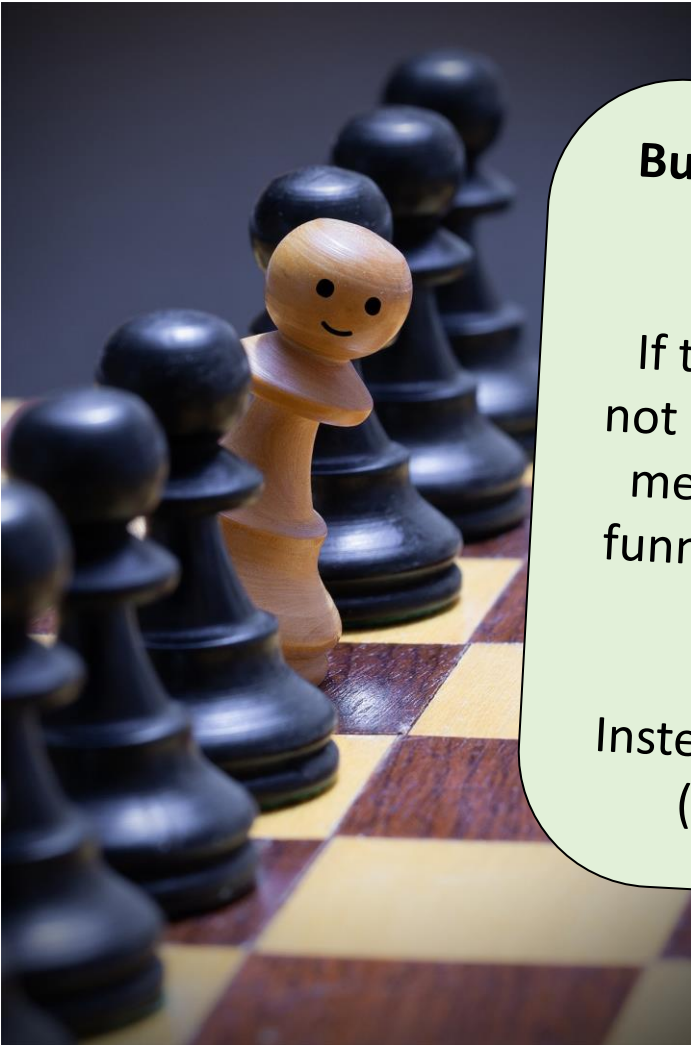
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In other words, in most of my real-life stories, I became the *“hapless marketer”*.

And this is a great outcome for students because they could learn from my mistakes, as I would often tell them that **you learn more from failed campaigns than successful ones.**



But humor does not work for everybody.

If this is something that does not come naturally to you, then memorizing a few “jokes and funny stories” may not execute well in the classroom.

Instead, **play to your strengths** (please see next page).

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TIP 6

Play to Your Strengths

As educators, we all have different backgrounds.

I came through the corporate sector and had marketing roles in six different companies before transitioning into education.

Some of you have spent your entire career in education, or have also had a corporate, or even an entrepreneurial, background.

And some of you are teaching-focused, whereas others are more interested in research.

These are **all potential strengths that you can leverage and utilize in the classroom.**



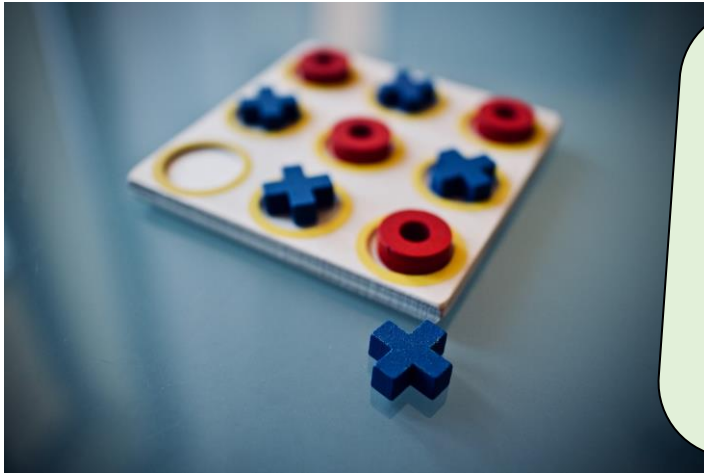
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Having a corporate background, I have lots of corporate stories – running campaigns, new products, dealing with agencies, analyzing data – so much of my teaching was built around real-life scenarios.

For those of you who are on the research side, then you have access to studies and interesting findings to draw upon to add value for your students.



Whatever your strengths and uniqueness as an educator, you should lean into that and play to your strengths.

There are no cookie-cutter educators and, as the student goes through their learning, **they get exposed to a variety of teaching styles and perspectives.**

This is a **fantastic experience for real-world marketing**, as these students will go on to a marketing career and work in unique workplaces, where every place and culture is different.

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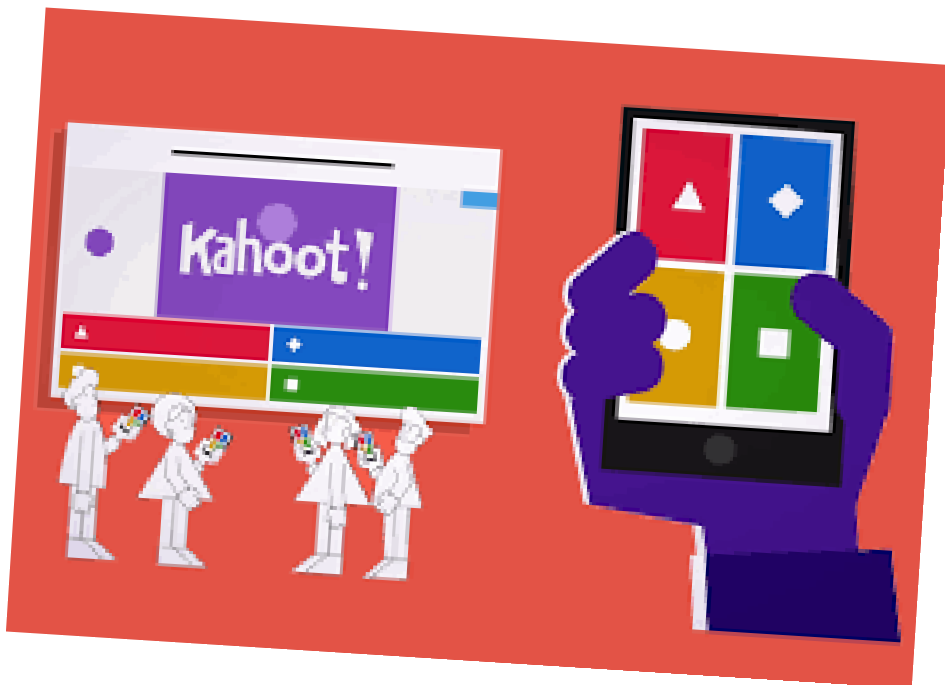
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TIP 7

Use EdTech Tools

No doubt you have used or experimented with EdTech tools already. I first started using Kahoot and online discussion boards back in 2016, and since then I would not run any units without using an array of EdTech tools.



And while there are lots of EdTech tools out there, in my opinion, **a must-have for any class is Kahoot**, because there are benefits for BOTH students and for educators.

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Key Benefits for Students:

- Kahoot is a fun interactive tool that **engages students**. In my experience in large lectures, you would normally have 95% of students playing along.
- It provides **great revision** – where students get **immediate feedback** on their level of understanding.
- It is **anonymous and competitive**, so all students want to play along – it's a game after all.
- And it means that students concentrate more on the class – because they want to win at Kahoot at the end.

Benefits for Educators

It also provides **fantastic feedback for you as an educator**.

I remember one lecture where I spent half of it discussing positioning and thought I'd made it very clear what positioning was. But... then the Kahoot was an eye-opener for me as 1/3rd of students got it wrong.

This gives me **immediate feedback** on my teaching and approach – what is working and what is not – very helpful information for any educator.

[Click here for further information on EdTech tools and gamification.](#)

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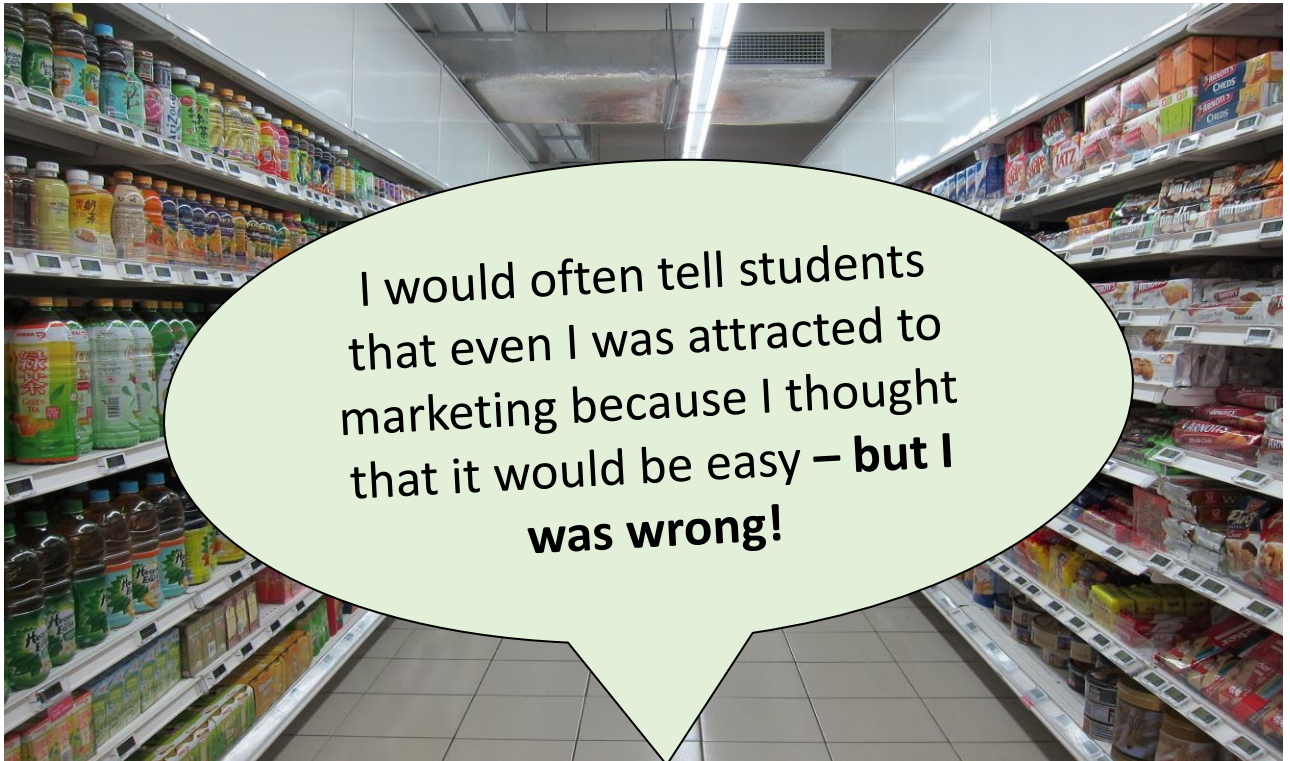
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TIP 8

Tell Your Students that Marketing is NOT Easy

One of the first things I would do in Marketing 101 (or similar) was to dispel the myth that marketing is easy.

No doubt you have students who are attracted to marketing on the perception that it is fun and easy. I agree, **marketing is fun, but it is certainly not easy!**



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My Story to Students

I would recount the story of leaving school to study accounting because I was good at economics and math in high school but soon realized that accounting was not for me.

Around that time, I came across a group of marketing students in the library watching Coca-Cola commercials, and I thought, *“That looks like fun and marketing looks like an easy career.”*

But fast-forward ten years to when I am a marketing manager in a large insurance firm and the CEO walks in and says, *“We made \$10m last year, we want to make \$12m this year – make it happen!”*

Suddenly marketing wasn't easy anymore. It's not that easy when you need to deliver a 20% increase in profit in 12 months. And “how” to do that is not sitting in a step-by-side guide in a marketing textbook.

That's why marketing is not easy – because you need to deliver on big goals and understand how to improve the business, regardless of the environment.

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TIP 9

Use Lots of Activities

I first developed the Great Ideas for Teaching Marketing site in 2012 and since then I have added many more activities and tools, as well as all the solutions and bonus teaching tips.

Marketing is a discipline best learned by doing. Sure, the theory sits in a textbook, but students can read that at any time.

In the classroom, you want to engage them, involve them, and **make them the marketer.**

I started developing teaching activities initially to supplement my own teaching. I found that straight lectures were boring for me and boring for students.

And to be honest, I was not teaching my students very much with a straight lecture approach.

**Become a GITM
Member**

- All solutions
- Exclusive activities
- Q+A section

[Find Out More](#)

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Key Benefits of a Great Ideas Membership



Improve student learning



Pick and choose from over 400 activities and tools



Appeal to different student learning styles



Enhance engagement



Save preparation time



Detailed Solutions

On Great Ideas, there are around 150 free teaching activities, plus 400+ activities and solutions for Members.

It covers a wide variety of topics and teaching styles – there is something for everybody! I encourage you to join Great Ideas. It certainly changed my teaching.

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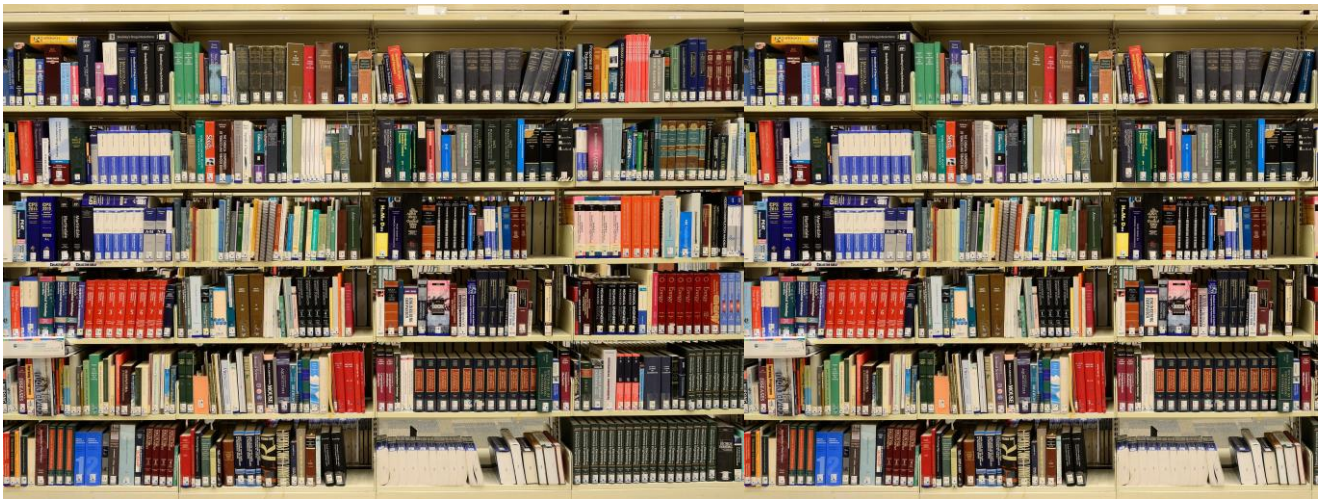
TIP 10

You Don't Need to Know Everything

For some reason, when most of us start out teaching, we think that **we need to be able to answer every possible question** that students could throw at us.

Why? Because we have this perception that, as professional educators, we need to be seen as experts.

Well... that's just unrealistic and simply not possible. There is no way that the "best" marketer in the world knows everything about every aspect of marketing.



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Although there are now fewer around, universities still have libraries with physical books. And if you ever stroll down the marketing section of a large library, you will find literally 1,000s of books on marketing.

There is no way anybody can know and recall every concept in all of those books. That means **that you do NOT need to know everything.**



So, when a student asks a question that we don't know – just go, *“that's a good question, it's not my area of expertise in marketing, but I will find out for you, and I'll let you know in the next class”.*

Not only does that make you more approachable and more likable, but it also takes any tension you may have from fielding student questions.

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TIP 11

Adapt Your Teaching to the Cohort

This is perhaps a hard one to get your head around, particularly if you are a relatively new educator. You will find that **cohorts and classes are always different!** No two are ever the same.

That's why, although we can keep within our teaching lane and play to our strengths, we need still **need to be adaptable and tailor our teaching** to the needs of our “target market” students.



I know how challenging this can be, as I taught from Marketing 101 (undergraduate), right up to postgraduate capstones – and lots of specialty courses along the way.

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This means that a teaching activity/approach and even cases and examples that work well with Marketing 101 will probably not be suitable for the MBA program and vice versa.

You need to be able to adapt your teaching style and your materials to meet the needs of your student “*target market*”.

This does not mean you dramatically need to reinvent yourself. But you need to be conscious of the level of experience and expectations of your students.

Again, that’s where the Great Ideas website comes in handy – as there are teaching activities and tools that can suit every cohort and class level.



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TIP 12

Be Innovative Each Term/Semester

One of the **great ways of improving our teaching is to experiment.**

In marketing, experiments are critical in today's world where we can gather data and experience about what works and doesn't.

We need to do the same thing in teaching.

Every semester, even though I was already implementing lots of variety and unique approaches in my teaching, **I always set a goal of having at least one new innovative approach.**



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Sometimes my innovation was an off-the-shelf EdTech solution, but often it was something I invented.

And sometimes these innovations worked really well and sometimes they needed refinement.

But the teaching journey never ends – there’s always something to do and areas to improve.

As you can guess, I personally enjoy the change and **enjoy bringing new ideas into the classroom.**

But I understand that some educators prefer a more standardized approach and may be more cautious of change.

Again, that’s where Great Ideas comes in, as I have used most of my activities in the classroom and I know what usually works well.



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TIP 13

Ask Why and So What?

It is important to push students for deeper understanding. If we just go through the textbook, with a handful of examples, and then a simple MCQ quiz at the end – then effectively students are only memorizing material, not really understanding it (in most cases).

The two most powerful questions you can have as a marketing educator are “*Why*” and “*So what?*”



For example, if you show a TV commercial to your students, they can most likely describe the product benefit and the consumer motivation – that’s often easy.

But you can then dig deeper...

- **WHY** did they focus on that specific benefit?
- **WHY** did they use a slice-of-life message execution?

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And you can dig even deeper with “So what?”

“They have positioned the product as the leading brand – SO WHAT?”

“They are in the growth phases of the PLC – SO WHAT?”



This teaching approach means that our students need to connect different marketing concepts – such as positioning, differentiation, being competitive, meeting needs, and so on.

This enables a much deeper understanding of marketing and helps create critical thinkers, which sets them up to be successful marketers in their careers.

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TIP 14

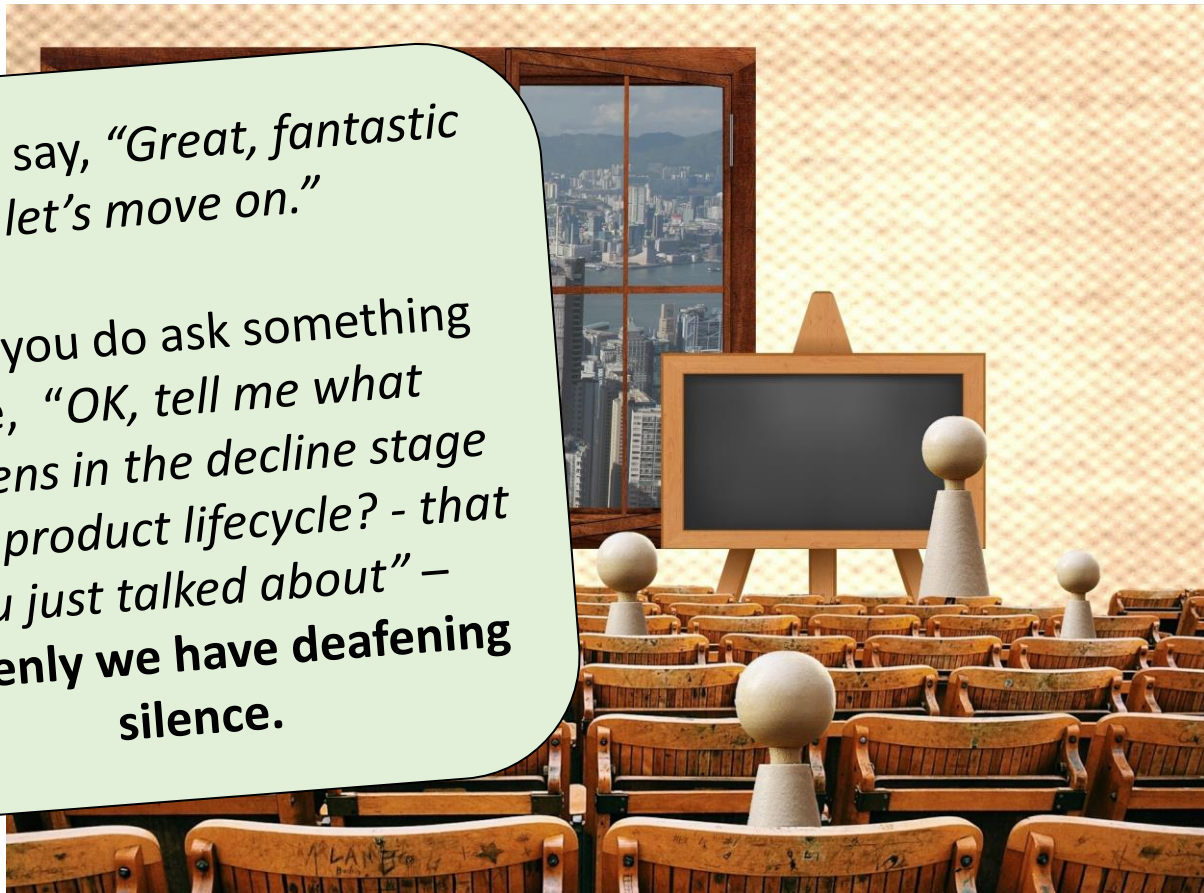
Get Students to Explain

We have all made the mistake of asking the question to the class *“Does everybody understand?”*

What a bad question that is. There is no answer to that other than all the students nodding their heads.

So you say, *“Great, fantastic let’s move on.”*

But if you do ask something like, *“OK, tell me what happens in the decline stage of the product lifecycle? - that you just talked about”* – **suddenly we have deafening silence.**



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And what's our reflex response? **To reexplain what we had just explained** – as if somehow repeating the same information, in the same manner, will work the second time around???



A much better approach is **to get students to form pairs/groups** to identify three characteristics that are unique to the decline stage and why.

What we are doing is getting some students in the group to explain the concept. And this approach dramatically the student's understanding of the material.

It is one thing to sit there and let the information wash over you – **but it is something else to have to reexplain that material to other students.**

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TIP 15

Get Moving

This is not an exercise tip, although it is helpful for getting 10,000 steps a day on your smartwatch.

By “*get moving*” I mean to move around the lecture hall or classroom. But why I hear you ask...

There are several benefits to moving around to different parts of your teaching space. These include:

- It adds some **visual engagement and variety** for your students
- You can ensure that students get “*equal attention*”, no matter where they are sitting
- It is easier to **encourage quieter students** if you are physically close to them
- You can **emphasize points** – on one side of the room can be points “for”, and then you cross to the other side of the room for points “against”
- It gives you **more energy** and enables you to enhance your “*performance*”

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In my teaching, I found it very difficult NOT to move around.

I know that there are some educators who feel safe behind the rostrum or the computer, but it decreases the energy of the lecture.

And it is also more difficult to encourage student engagement and interaction if you are somewhat hidden away.

So, get moving – and it's healthy for you too.

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TIP 16

Always Give Positive Feedback in Class

In the classroom, especially in marketing, **there are no bad answers**. We've all had that situation where posed the question and a student responded with a "*ridiculous*" answer.

The worst thing we can do is to say "*No, that's not quite right, or that won't work*", or something similar.



Much of my postgraduate teaching at the University of Sydney was with Chinese students. They have the concept of "*face*", and some can be introverted in class. And if you give negative feedback, many of them will shut down and are unlikely to participate again.

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And because we're in marketing, we can always frame it that **in marketing there are no silly ideas**.

Any idea, no matter how silly, may lead to something special and creative.

So, whenever I was faced with a student with a "*ridiculous*" response, I would usually say something like:

- "*That's a great idea*" or
- "*That's an interesting idea*".

And then I would write it out and say, "*Let's get back to that later and see if we can build on it.*"



With this approach, I have given positive feedback, encouraged other students to participate, and kept going with the teaching activity. And sometimes those *silly ideas* turn out to be the best ideas.

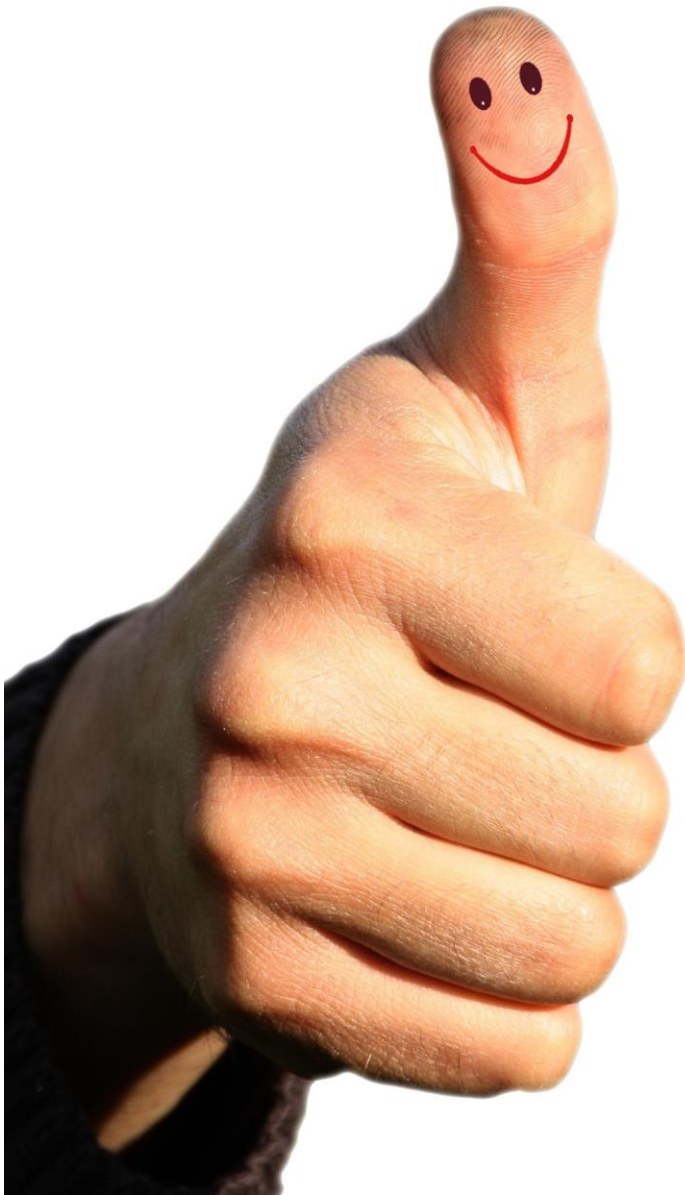
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TIP 17

Have Fun



This should be a no-brainer for marketing educators, but sometimes we get so caught up in what we trying to deliver and communicate that **we forget that this should be a positive experience for us as well.**

I have genuinely **enjoyed most of my lectures**, and we are talking somewhere around 1,800 lectures in my teaching career, across 10 different universities in Australia.

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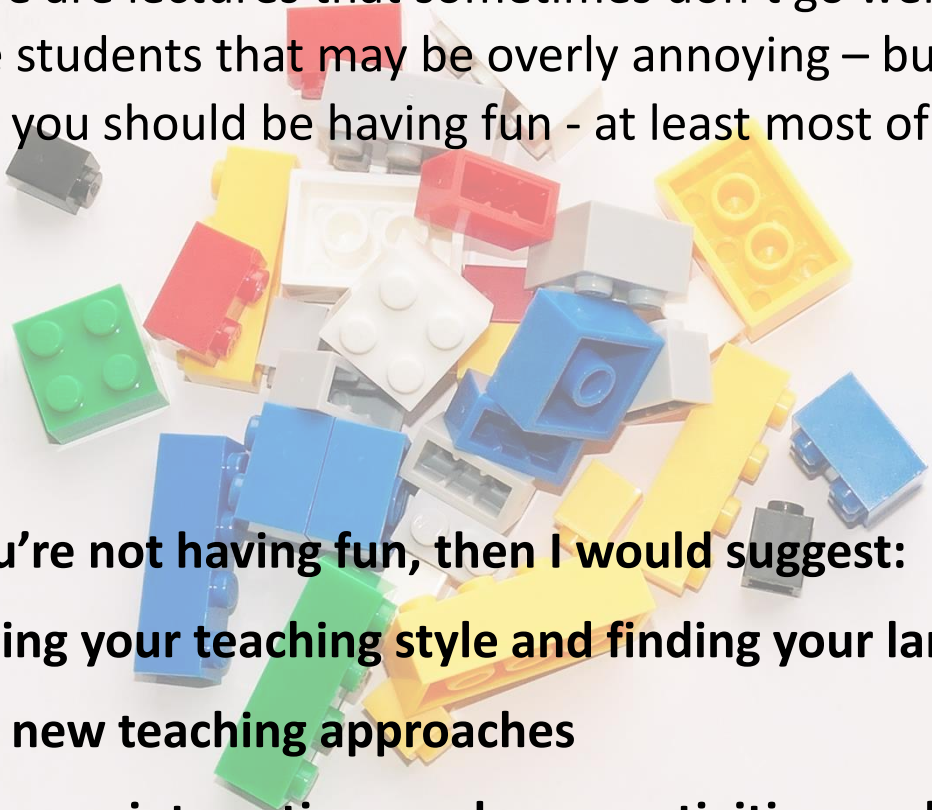
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I enjoyed the student interaction, formulating the teaching material in a creative way, getting to know many students, and helping them learn.

There's no way I could've done that amount of teaching without really enjoying and having fun with it.

Sure, there are lectures that sometimes don't go well and some students that may be overly annoying – but generally, you should be having fun - at least most of the time.



And if you're not having fun, then I would suggest:

- **Changing your teaching style and finding your lane**
- **Trying new teaching approaches**
- **Using more interactions and more activities, such as those on the Great Ideas teaching site**
- **And, most importantly, following some of the tips in this teaching guide**

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Register Your Interest

Upcoming Online Course: Tips, Tricks, and Tools to Improve Your Teaching

Designed for Marketing Educators

I am currently in the process of developing an online course for teaching marketing where I build upon many of these teaching tips, along with many others.

If you are interested in more information on this course and announcements closer to launch, as well as getting a discount on the course, please register your interest in the link below.

Please note that this is a registration of interest only, and it doesn't commit you to the course. It just lets me know that you may be interested, so I can send you updates as we get closer to the launch (July 2023).

[Click here to register your interest in the course.](#)

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