

Topic: Competitive Event Prep

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Reisenauer's students have a steady record of competitive event success, both at the state and national levels. So how does he guide them?

Kevin's first admonition is to start early enough in the year to allow students to achieve polished products.

This leads to his second observation: the students who do best are those who continue to make changes on their projects, that is, who invest themselves in a process of improving their work.

And this leads to a third observation: it is best to get others, especially businesspeople and other teachers, involved in helping your students. Businesspeople not only provide information for students, but can check projects to make sure they meet the test of actual business relevance. Businesses especially like to involve themselves with market research projects, since they derive benefit from the results. If the project looks good to a functioning business professional, chances are it will look good to a judge. This is why an active business advisory council is important. How do you keep your business partners engaged? Kevin says, put them to work. They like to help, and helping invests them in your program.

Another person to involve in the project is an English teacher—a proven technique for success. Kevin's students are fortunate to be taking marketing as a block class with English. This rare pairing of marketing, a vocational course, with English, an academic course, works.

Two other guidelines provide useful feedback for a student's project. First, is it long enough? Length for its own sake is not the goal, but completeness of the project is. Kevin says you cannot do a full-blown project in less than 20 pages, and the judges know that. The second tip: as fundamental as it seems, have the students judge their own work in light of the six basic questions—does each section answer *who, what, where, when, why and how*? Incomplete information leaves the judges asking the unanswered questions, and the project will be found wanting.

Kevin also weighs in on the importance of presentation skills for competition participants. Although the interview portion of the written events counts for only 30 points, a good presentation can cause the judge to read a manual with more interest. The key here?—PRACTICE! Kevin finds ways to combine presentation practice with public relations for the chapter.