

Topic: Competitive Events—Tips for the Marketing Research Events

Advisor: Dennis Sweetapple
Boca Raton High School, Florida

Over the years, Dennis Sweetapple has given us great advice on the Marketing Research Events. Taking out the specific advice for the yearly topics, here is a consolidated column of his advice.

Section I, the Executive Summary, will be written last, since it will reflect in brief the whole project. “THIS MUST BE GREAT!” says Sweetapple. Just as a handshake makes a first impression, a well-organized yet succinct executive summary raises the judge’s opinion of the project immediately. Then it helps guide the reader through the rest of the project.

The section on research methods used in the study is where most participants will need some direction.

One simple piece of advice is to **look carefully at the written entry evaluation form** and note which items account for the highest evaluation points. Be sure to take care in those areas that earn the most points.

Sweetapple’s students submit their events as class projects. But the class paper is just the draft of the event. If they want to enter it for competition, they do more work on it, and the draft of 12 to 16 pages then turns into a polished submitted event of 30 pages.

One interesting piece of advice: “If you expect your kids to do a written event, you really should put in the effort to write one yourself! Then when the students ask questions, you will know from experience how to answer them.” Dennis did actually undertake an event himself. He talked to store managers, conducted the survey and even went to the library to do research. Sounds like an effective way to “walk the walk.”

Try to **approach the process with enthusiasm**, because the students will reflect your attitude. You can begin with just a few students the first time through and learn how to do it along with them. One of the great things about these events is that even students with limited skills can complete a manual. Their projects may not be competition quality, but the students will feel a sense of pride and accomplishment at producing a piece of research—and they will have expended their skill level whatever the starting point.

As Dennis plans for his teaching year, **his first topic for the class is marketing research.** He starts with the textbook chapter on marketing research and then fills in the content of marketing as the students proceed on their own projects. This approach underlines the utility of the Marketing Research Events for delivering marketing concepts. The substance of an area is learned best in the context of using it.

With politicians and administrators increasingly demanding **comprehensive testing** for fundamentals, **Dennis is confident that he can demonstrate how the research events deliver skills.** For a start, marketing research involves writing and rewriting, a process that raises language competence. The surveys and budgets that students produce and process call for computation skills. And if asked how the skills cross over, teachers can point out that the projects require students to write about math, explaining how the figures they produce furnish the rationale for their plans. Higher-level skills are present in abundance as well.

Dennis advises that one key to success with marketing research events is to **explain them to your students in ways they can under-**

stand and relate to. For example, he feels that although the Written Entry Evaluation Form (page 84 of your Guide), presents much information students need to grasp, a better place to send students initially is to the description of the event that starts earlier. The bullets under “Participants in the Marketing Research Events will . . .” are easier to understand. He specifically notes that the three bulleted items describing the presentation of the event are especially helpful in explaining how to organize the presentation.

Dennis **presents to his students a hand-out listing the sections of the event outline.** Beneath each entry, he describes that element in more specific, simpler terms. He says that even academically talented students don’t have enough experience to see clearly what the sections mean. For example, under “Description of the Business” he explains, “In this section you write about the individual store, things like when the store opened, where it is located, how many employees it

has, hours of operation, product lines, price range, size of the store, if it is a corporate store, some background of the corporation, etc.

Each of Dennis’s students is required to have an advisory committee, and he explains under the “Steps taken to design the study and the instrument,” “Write how you developed your advisory committee and the input the committee had in helping you develop the method you will use in gathering the data you will need for completing the requested information. If you use a survey, how were the questions included in the survey developed, and how was all this done (who, when and where)?

Dennis also makes sure that cooperating businesses receive a copy of the research. This gesture of goodwill helps continue business partnerships.

