



## Meet master teacher Darrin Joines You too can teach through the Marketing Research Events

### Start Small

We interviewed **Darrin Joines (Beech H.S., Tennessee)** about this topic of motivating advisors to do written events. A team from Beech has won first place in the Retail Marketing Research Event for the past two years. Darrin feels that almost any DECA advisor is capable of running written events. His most important piece of advice is to work toward doing written events in your program bit by bit, and not expect to have a full-fledged program of projects at the start. “Some advisors may try to hit the home run before they hit the single.” Darrin says he started working with written events by doing the “10-pagers” first. This means setting your sights on the Fashion Merchandising Promotion Plan event and the Advertising Campaign event. (Entrepreneurship Participating is also a 10-pager, and might also work here.) *[See the Competitive Events wall poster that comes every year for a quick overview of requirements.]*

Darrin says that **the small manuals have all of the elements of the larger projects like the Marketing Research Events (MREs), but everything is shorter.** “They are written the same, have similar guidelines and have sections laid out; they’re just shorter.” Participants in these events even have to deal with the background information on a company, an essential element of the MREs. So the answer to whether or not you feel you will be capable of running the MREs and other written events is to take one step at a time. This is the same advice you give your participating members if they feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task: “break it down.”

Marketing education at Beech H.S. has developed into a two-year program. As the program evolved, Darrin cut his own dis-

tinctive pathway toward procedures that work for him. Second-year students now go into the advanced marketing course knowing they will be doing a written event as an integral part of their course work. By then, Darrin has established techniques to get them used to the idea in some creative ways.

Set up deadlines for the events before you start. The first time Darrin ran a written event, they did not set deadlines. “We just wanted to see if we could do this thing.” Now he breaks out the smaller parts of the assignment and assigns deadlines for completion. “Most students feel they can’t write the paper. So get them to do two or three pages at a time.”

One major motivator for students is to let them choose what area they will do the research on. They may like sports or shopping or computers. The project needs to reflect their interests.

### Surveys Are Fun

The heart of the MREs is the survey, and Darrin has discovered that doing this research is actually a big motivator for students in its own right. “Kids like to get the surveys back and see the results. It seems nerdy, but they really like it.” As the chapter does research around the area for businesses, the members get excited, especially with tasks like the research they did for the Nashville Sounds baseball team. Since the research is so cool, and since survey techniques are also part of the first-year curriculum, teams can involve the first-year students in their surveying and actually treat them as advisors to the team. When students get to the second year, they already have their feet wet in the MREs and want to do them.

### Chapter Written Events As Motivators

Darrin uses the **chapter** written events to give first-year students other positive experiences with the projects. For example, the chapter ran a Civic Consciousness project

“Some advisors may try to hit the home run before they hit the single.”

“The [10-page manuals] are written the same [as the Marketing Research Events], have similar guidelines and have sections laid out; they’re just shorter.”

“Kids like to get the surveys back and see the results. It seems nerdy, but they really like it.”

that raised almost \$6,000 for underprivileged kids. The first-year members were taken along on the shopping trip and given an amount of money to spend for the recipients. As a result, members were motivated through the joy of helping their community.

“My advice is for advisors and chapter members to discuss the possibilities for attacking the research problem. A variety of techniques can be used in terms of whom to survey and the types of questions to ask. Regardless of the strategy, a focused plan is necessary in order to achieve your desired results. In addition, the questions asked through the survey should address the Findings and Conclusions portion of the research project. Finally, **our chapter attempts to cover the required areas by developing approximately 10 questions. Respondents lose interest and focus when answering too many questions.**”

*Advisor As Manager*

Does running written events take time? Yes, but as you move along you can get smarter at it. Darrin says that when he started into the events, he wanted to do too much. He now says the advisor’s primary role is to be the manager for the teams, and he has learned how to put more of the burden on others. Advisors help with the vision and the motivation, and encourage their students. “People always do what they really want to do. Once you see the kids succeeding and see the value of the written projects in their lives, you will want to do them.” Darrin says he learned a lot from actively seeking advice from other knowledgeable advisors.

At the moment, first-year students at Beech participate only in series events. As a trial, however, this year the advisors are going to have first-year marketing students do a 10-page manual. The advisors will then pick any they think are promising to submit into competition.

Darrin doesn’t call his business contacts an advisory board, but he stressed that what he

calls “networking in the business community” is “essential to the success of written projects. You need a business to work with.” The chapter has done work for various businesses in the community, and has even used the school as its partner for a Creative Marketing Research Project. The chapter decided to promote things happening at its school. Again, the members were asked to choose what to do based on their interests, and in this case they concentrated on fine arts. During the course of the project, the chapter promoted 81 events at the school with techniques ranging from simple flyers to much more elaborate methods.

Many advisors understand that marketing presents unique opportunities to reach into the community. Because you teach promotion, sales and marketing research, you can help community organizations or businesses, even your school, by simply teaching your subject well—adding the real-world dimension. The side benefits are respect and support for your DECA chapter.