



Selling your Design Ideas: 45 Seconds or Less

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With the advent of the internet and numerous means of quick communication, such as Whatsapp®, Viber®, Instagram®, Facebook®, Snapchat®, Twitter®, Messenger®, and WeChat®, we can share what we are doing with others almost instantly (Akhtar, 2013). Fashion companies are using social media and other quick communication tools to promote merchandise, share ideas and create a following among customers. As the world changes around us daily, it is ever more important to practice and develop “the ability to stand and deliver a powerful presentation that engages each audience member’s whole mind (Reynolds, 2011, p. 12). With the rapid means to share ideas and visuals considered to be normal and expected, we need to help our students learn to promote their ideas and themselves this way.

In apparel product development classes, students develop product lines starting with development of inspiration boards and execution of design concepts and a color palette. Next, they needed to simulate the process of line presentation, where the team members must present and justify their work to the boss, the owners, and key stake holders such as head retail buyers. For some fashion companies, this involves the promotion of the idea through social media such as Instagram®, Facebook®, Snapchat®, and Twitter®, where space is a premium and time is fast. We decided that the product development course, with its idea to market project flow, was the best place to introduce the social media sound bite.

To help students train for using the quick promotion technique, we reduced their product line presentation time from the traditional three to five minute presentations using Prezi®, or PowerPoint® to 30 to 45 second “sound bites.” When assigning this portion of the product line project, it was important that students understood what a “sound bite” meant. To introduce the concept, the definition from Merriam Webster website (n.d.) was discussed in class. The definition use was as follows: “a brief recorded statement (as by a public figure) broadcast especially on a television news program (para 1).” In addition, students were asked to spend some time listening to radio and television news casts to get an idea of how to use important and industry specific words, and how to avoid unnecessary filler words that did not add to the message.

When the assignment was first given several students did not think it was possible to “get across” all the information they wanted to in such a short time, and felt they needed more time to share about their work. However, when pointed to tools they used daily as means of quick communication of events and happenings in their lives for general quick dialogues, such as Instant Messaging®, students began to see the assignment as a do-able and fun challenge. The results were great! During the in-class presentation times, we listened, learned, and were informed through short stories, poems, and several radio-like short ‘jingles.’

Beyond the fun of listening and the excitement of learning about new products, four important outcomes became obvious. First, the sound bite was a very unique presentation concept to a class of peers, even though these students use these tools every day in their nonacademic lives. Second, each student saw and experienced speaking to, and participating in, a group who was completely engaged with what was being said. Third, students had to become very succinct and clear with their message, which caused them to focus on what was really important about their product line. And fourth, as a culmination of the preceding finding, information presented was focused, organized, and uncluttered. Unnecessary fill-in words that added nothing to the presentation and material were eliminated and the flow of information was well targeted and dynamic. Students did learn to drill down to the essence of their product line and were able to deliver a focused and meaningful presentation in less time than they had imagined possible. We highly recommend reducing the time for class presentations as both a way to generate a focused presentation as well as keeping student interest high during other students’ presentations. We are already reviewing other classes for places to implement the quick communication idea.

References

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