

MY TYPICAL INTRODUCTORY APPROACH

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Leonard Deneault*

Adjunct Professor, Division of Business Administration, Rivier College



Setting – round tables with at least six individuals sitting at each, having a total of over 40 individuals in the room. The choice of equipment used by the other panelists to address the audience was a raised podium with microphone. As the second presenter, I chose not to use this equipment as this did not truly represent my style.

My preference was to demonstrate to the attendees my typical introductory approach to my students, so my goal in this presentation was to engage the attendees. In an actual classroom setting, the instructor's goal is to engage all students. I begin this by walking amongst them and up to them, while speaking directly at specific individuals. This encourages engagement.

My students are all graduate-level, business professional adult learners. Many have a wealth of work experience in their chosen field, and have become experts in what they do, including some having had more than one career. My students are typically management level individuals, who have taken a leadership role in furthering their education, and they know what they need to succeed.

To set this all in context for my presentation audience, I demonstrated an example of what I do in the first fifteen minutes of my class, which begins on a Friday evening. This is the start of a “weekend warrior” class, which continues the sessions all day Saturday and Sunday. We work together all weekend long.

I have to capture their interest in the first 15 minutes. Here's why. Almost all have just gotten out of work, probably having worked 50-60 hours by this time. They are tired after being “beaten” on all week, whether it would be by customers, direct reports, or their managers. Add to this the fact that they usually have to skip dinner to get to class on time.

Each student is asked to tell the class about their profession – what they do, or what they have done. This is all recorded by flip chart, and by the end of this exercise, these flip charts are displayed listing all the different professions. This demonstrates to students the richness of the diversity of experience that exists in this class, which is generally representative of the diversity in their workplace – and they have never really realized how extensive this can be. Although each student has a goal to pass the class and graduate from the program, but the key for us is how they learn in order to reach that goal in their own way. I need to engage them in order for me to best do that.

With the flipcharts in the background, I then provide real examples of how the upcoming subject content will directly link to the diversity in their work and education. I want to show to them that with all this experience, they can bring something tangible home from this class to improve the work, whether it be for themselves, their colleagues, or their people.

What I get in return is continuous participation and engagement of the student. This shows that they themselves can change their environment, in a positive, yet realistic way, to create a “what can be.” They are really here to learn how to make a difference and it's my job to bring that home.

* **LEONARD DENEAULT** is the Executive Director for MassExcellence, a state Baldrige-based program providing leadership a proven business framework enabling them to achieve measurable improvements in excellence. Len is also the founding partner for the leadership consulting firm, The Northeast Center for Excellence. As an adjunct professor at Bentley College and Rivier College, he brings to students a wide range of experience in government, high-tech manufacturing, non-profit, and healthcare. In addition, he has served as a Senior and Alumni Examiner on the Board of Examiners for the U.S. Department of Commerce's Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program, whose charter is to improve national competitiveness and organizational excellence by building active partnerships in and among the private and public sector, and all levels of government. This year, he is a co-author of the Baldrige-2007 Case Study used to train all National and State Program Examiners.