Do Pass-Fail Experiential Learning Activities Enhance Gen Z Sales Student Engagement?

By Kevin W. Westbrook and Charles Howlett

College professors face significant challenges to keep Gen Z sales students motivated to complete experiential learning events/activities for course points that require only participation, but are not evaluated based on an understanding of content. An assessment of performance data of 280 undergraduate sales students in a sales course across eight semesters prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that 60% could have improved their semester grade by merely completing activities which were assessed as pass-fail during the course. Male students were nearly two times more likely to fail to change their grade by earning all pass-fail activity points than female students. Student feedback suggests there are challenges with time management, clarity of task assignments, and self-regulation. Pedagogical implications are provided as suggestions to increase sales student motivation to pass-fail, experiential learning assignments.

The sudden impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring 2020 significantly changed the undergraduate sales student experience in a sales course. The initial expectation was that stay-at-home orders would be short-term since many health experts, including members of the World Health Organization, believed that COVID-19 would mirror the 2002 SARS outbreak, and life would return to normal within four to six months (Bacon 2020). However, as the number of cases and death toll burgeoned, there was evidence of more contagious and deadlier strains of the COVID-19 virus, originating in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021) calling for prolonged orders for shuttering and social distancing. In addition, vaccine distribution experienced unanticipated delays until early 2021. To this end, many business schools opted to continue virtual instruction, require social distancing, and call for face masks for most of the entire 2020-2021 academic year.

Perhaps the most significant concern of the pandemic was lower student engagement which is defined as " . . the interaction between the time, effort, and other

relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution" (Trowler 2010, p. 2). As measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey, student engagement is determined as the ratio of student time allocation to learning activities to overall educational expenses (Fosnacht and Gonyea 2018; Lester 2013). For business schools offering sales courses, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business emphasizes the cruciality of student engagement as part of Assurance of Learning standards (AASCB 2020). Obviously, sales students assume personal responsibility to engage with their academic work while business instructors are charged to implement efficacious teaching approaches (Axelson and Flick 2011).

Marketing instructors face significant challenges to create sales coursework that is interesting and an enjoyable offering of experiential learning activities that enhance student engagement (Inks, Schetzsle, and Avila 2011). Experiential learning activities have a positive impact on student engagement (Palia 2020) and enhance student performance in a sales course. Personal selling is a skills-oriented discipline which is "best taught with methods that emphasize actively practicing the skills in situations and with exercises that approximate the way the skills will be deployed on the job" (Healy, Taran, and Betts 2011, p. 2). Experiential

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learning activities provide requisite applied, active experiences that enhance personal selling skills (Healy, Taran and Betts 2011; Inks, Schetzsle, and Avila 2011). Examples of experiential learning activities from the sales literature have been sales process simulations, non-profit consulting projects (Kosnik, Tingle, and Blanton 2013), student learning journals (McHann and Frost 2010), and attendance at product launch and industry trade shows (Bobbitt et al. 2000). Other experiential learning activities are in-class industry company presenters, shadow days with business professionals, attendance at networking events, use of LinkedIn learning modules, sales webinars, and sales skills workshops.

The aim of this study is to explore student willingness to complete experiential learning, participation-only activities (pass-fail) to induce student engagement in an undergraduate sales course. First, is there a difference between male and female students to complete experiential learning, participation-only activities (pass-fail)? Second, what effect has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the completion of experiential learning, participation-only activities (pass-fail)? In addition, the authors provide a descriptive discussion of the Gen Z cohort and their expectations for experiential learning in a sales course and explore a theoretical framework for college student motivation based on self-determination theory. Third, the authors examine eight semesters (spanning both the pre-pandemic and pandemic time periods) of student classroom performance based on the completion of pass-fail, experiential learning assignments that would have resulted in points added to the student's overall class performance. Finally, a discussion of student motivation and pedagogical implications is provided based on the findings from this study.

THE GEN Z STUDENT

Most current undergraduates (18 to 22 years of age) are Gen Z students who are described as the most educated, intelligent, entrepreneurial, and technological generational cohort to attend college (Grow and Yang 2018; Parker and Igielnik 2020). They are loyal, hard-working to the point of being workaholics, and diverse (Parker and Igielnik 2020; Zapier Editorial Team 2020); value individual expression; avoid labels;

mobilize around social causes; prefer dialogue over discourse; and relate to institutions in an analytical and practical approach (Francis and Hoefel 2018). Gen Z students desire personal privacy and virtual communications (texting, Instagram and SnapChat) (Grow and Yang 2018) over face-to-face and telephonic interactions. Most self-learn (Schwieger and Ladwig 2018), are comfortable gathering information via social media versus reading a book; communicate through videos, images and memes; learn holistically; depend on peer groups, global opinions, and social media platforms for values formation and clarification; and learn experientially versus rote memorization (Clark, Howley and Swatt 2018; Creighton 2018). Finally, many Gen Z students are kinesthetic learners and expect experiential learning through task performance and interaction with others (Othman et al. 2019) during business coursework.

Concomitant in some circles, Gen Z students have been described as apathetic, unprepared for the real world, unaware, the "Zombie Generation" and the "Generation Lay-Z" (Foltz 2020; Micoleta 2012). Many require instant gratification, are digitally-addicted and distracted, and have short attention spans (Micoleta 2012). One survey showed 35% of Gen Z students felt their digital device was a "medium" to a "big distraction" during the college experience (McCoy 2020). They seem to be excessively busy, procrastinate, and struggle with task prioritization, and look for shortcuts leading to answers as "creating cheats" (Renfro 2012). As Rue (2018) states, "We can predict that they [Gen Z] won't sit through a college lecture when they could read the same material three times as fast, while also navigating to different web sources simultaneously, integrating that information" (p. 8).

Thus, educating the Gen Z student requires additional time and effort to bolster student engagement (Autry and Berge 2011). The average Gen Z "expects a very different teaching experience than what previous generations have found appropriate and acceptable" (Cretu, Grigore, and Scripcariu 2020, p. 283). Known as the "Net Generation" (Berk 2009), Gen Z students desire freedom to make choices and expect assignments to have a clear purpose, combine skills and competencies to effectuate change, promote

informational literacy, and have an endpoint or destiny of structured tasks (Mohr and Mohr 2017). As such, Gen Z has less interest in traditional teaching approaches such as the "sage on the stage" in the lecture hall (King 1993), but rather prefer informal learning activities that "are predominantly self-directed, intentional, and field-based" (Cerasoli et al. 2018, p. 204). To this end, there have been emerging changes adopted in higher education curriculum to include an emphasis on student learning across different settings, personalization and student choice relating to curriculums, use of project-based learning, hands-on learning through internships, data analytics during decision-making, assessment involving knowledge platforms, and self-instruction (Hussin 2018).

Experiential Learning Assignments and the Gen Z Student

Sales students should grasp a theoretical knowledge of selling, in addition to a solid demonstration of applied, practical knowledge of personal selling behaviors. Kosnik, Tingle, and Blanton (2013) call for "hands-on learning [that] will become a pivotal component of a successful business education" (p. 613-4). Past studies support the positive impact of "learning by doing" (McCarthy 2016) since experiential learning activities increase student engagement and outcomes (Maloni, Hiatt and Campbell 2019; Schwieger and Ladwig 2018). Based on Kolb and Kolb (2009), Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) conjectures that learning as a process is measured beyond outcomes alone and entails continuous relearning. ELT suggests that students undergo continuous refinement of ideas and beliefs, analyze dichotomous and even conflicting ideas, see learning as holistic and adaptable, combine learning with personal interactions, and create knowledge. They further express that experiential learning centers on concrete experience (e.g., attending an industry networking event), reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The requisite components of effective experiential learning are business curriculum-related, applicable, participative, interactive, whole-person emphasized, contact with the real-world environment, variable and uncertain, structured, based on student evaluation, and feedback-based (Gentry 1990).

There is prevailing support that experiential learning enhances student skills in the areas of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, responsibility and creativity (Wurdinger and Allison 2017). Experiential learning enhances overall skills engagement (practicing skills), emotional engagement (emotional involvement), participation/interaction engagement (participating and interacting with peers and the instructor), and performance engagement (engagement through levels of performance in class) (Dostaler, Robinson, and Tomberlin 2017). It continues to be a vital link between a theoretical and practical understanding (Perrin 2014). For example, based on one survey, 9 out of 10 Gen Z students favor working with a real outside client as part of a case study to reinforce requisite skills needed in real-work settings (Nicholas 2020). In reaching the Gen Z learner, there is a need for the use of interactive activities (e.g., role-plays, simulations), peer learning (e.g., student presentations), demonstrated learning (e.g., a good sales call recorded on a web-based video) and digital and social media-based learning (blogs, YouTube videos, etc.) (Seemiller and Grace 2019).

In relation to teaching sales, the use of experiential learning assignments is called "teaching innovation" (Rippe 2015; Spiller 2018). Perhaps the most common teaching innovation has been role plays or simulations that resemble selling engagements between a buyer and seller. For a thorough discussion and literature review of the use of role playing in the classroom, refer to Beuk (2016). Other types of sales role plays and simulations have improved student perceptions for the sales profession, sales knowledge, selling ethics, intent to pursue a sales career, level of enjoyment working with people from other cultures, level of comfort working virtually, and confidence in personal intercultural negotiation skills (Herlache et al. 2018). Role plays and simulations enhance a student's selling adaptation skills (Rodriquez and Boyer 2018), student confidence, communication skills, and career preparedness (Pelletier and Hopkins 2018). Student self-recorded role plays have been found to augment student discussions after in-class lectures and interactions with a guest speaker who presented on inside sales (Magnotta 2018).

Other alternatives used to enhance student engagement have been offered in the marketing literature. Peterson (2001) posits that instructors should ask students to document individual participation within course activities as a means to enhance student self-learning. This activity could be accomplished through the submission of weekly activity reports and course learning journal entries. Moreover, the use of "show and sell" exercises, requiring the actual sale of a product (e.g., chocolate bar) to both businesses and consumers, impact student competencies to locate prospects, adjust to the customer interests and personalities, plan for sales calls, deal with objections, and close a sale (Rippe 2015). Intracollegiate sales competitions have been shown to impact student perceptions of a sales career, knowledge of the sales process, and intent to pursue a sales career after graduation (Magnotta, Peev and Steffes 2020). Story-selling exercises enhance student knowledge and skills related to written sales persuasion (Spiller 2018), and Rippe, Martinson and Dubinsky (2017) used the DiSC profile assessment to guide students with adaptive selling behaviors based on individual seller profiles.

Experiential learning assignments impact student engagement and ultimately overall student achievement if students perceive that the activity has high task value. Zumbrunn et al. (2014) posit that student engagement is directly influenced by task value of an activity or behavior which is distally influenced by a supportive classroom environment and perceptions of belonging. They offer the following serial mediated path to show the relationships among distinct variables that impact overall student achievement as supportive classroom environment → belonging → self-efficacy and task value → engagement → achievement. According to expectancy-value theory (Atkinson 1957), students perform tasks that are valued compared to those bringing little value to achieving performance (Wigfield and Eccles 1992). Task value is measured as a student's perceptions of intrinsic interest pertaining to course content and assignments, perceived usefulness (e.g., benefits to the overall learning process), and perceived importance (e.g., impact on the final grade for the course) (Neuville, Frenay, and Bourgeois 2007). Task value leads to student engagement which would then impact higher student achievement, lower student attrition

and higher student retention (Zumbrunn et al. 2014). Harris (2011) posits that student engagement entails participating, enjoying (interest during participation), being motivated, thinking, seeing purpose, and owning learning. To encourage higher student engagement, instructors are required to deliver and prescribe learning activities; modify activities to cater to student interest, motivation and ability; and collaborate with students to create curriculum that enhances the student's purpose (Harris 2011).

Pass-Fail Grading and the Gen Z Student

A second consideration to increase student engagement is tied to the pass/fail grading system as an alternative to the multi-interval grading system. According to Nicholas (2020), 83% of respondents within a New England college indicated that they are interested and willing to do work that will help [them] to learn the course material, but is not graded. While pass-fail grading systems are not directly tied to academic performance, they do free up time for other academic activities (Gold et al. 1971), reduce fear of failure and anxiety (Bloodgood et al. 2009; Chamberlin, Yasue, and Chiang 2018), and enhance intrinsic motivation (White and Fantone 2010). From there, intrinsic motivation increases overall student engagement in academic activities which positively impacts overall academic performance (Saeed and Zyngier 2012; Zumbrunn et al. 2014). Hence, pass-fail grading systems serve as a distal influence on academic performance through its impact on motivation and student engagement.

Recent studies suggest that multi-level grading can deleteriously affect student anxiety, burnout, hopelessness, social comparison, stress, feelings of failure, and disconnection with instructors (Chamberlin, Yasue, and Chiang 2018; Reed et al. 2011; Rohe et al. 2006). On the other hand, pass-fail grading systems may enhance academic motivation (Chamberlin, Yasue, and Chiang 2018; Melrose 2017), reduce unhealthy competition (Melrose 2017), serve to level out the playing field among students, and spur self-regulated learning (White and Fantone 2010). Pass/fail grading improves student satisfaction with the quality of the education and within a student's personal life without affecting performance (Bloodgood et al. 2009; White and Fantone 2010) and can bolster a student's sense of

belonging and self-efficacy (Chamberlin, Yasue, and Chiang 2018) which in turn helps to increase personal engagement leading to increased academic performance (Zumbrunn et al. 2014). A search of the sales and marketing literature indicates a theoretical gap as to whether pass-fail grading impacts student performance in an undergraduate sales course.

Gender Differences and Student Engagement

There is mixed support as to whether males and females academically perform differently in a marketing classroom. Borde (1998) found that grade point average, academic origin, and employment commitments are significant predictors of student performance in an introductory marketing course, yet binary gender has no significant influence. Confirming these earlier findings, Brau et al. (2016) surveyed 835 marketing students and found gender has little effect on student performance outcomes. Finally, McIntyre, Hite, and Rickard (2003) found no significant differences between male and female students as traditional, non-traditional or executive MBA students on creativity within a marketing class.

Conversely, there are research studies which indicate that there are gender differences in performance among marketing students. Female students outperformed male students in an urban community college completing a partially online introductory course in marketing and marketing research on final course grades adjusted for extra credit, pre-semester cumulative grade point averages adjusted for extra credit, and scores on three early semester extra credit assignments (Volchok 2018). Another study showed that male undergraduate business administration students generally outperform females in quantitative courses, but female undergraduate business administration students outperform males in nonquantitative courses (Krishna and Orhun 2021). Arbaugh (2000) found that there are no gender differences relating to learning within an online, asynchronous MBA course, however, male students have more difficulty interacting with peers and instructors which affects class participation. Finally, there is research positing that female students are more likely to graduate and have a higher number of completed credits and higher GPAs compared to male students (Conger and Long 2010; Ewert 2012).

There is support that female and male students differ on student engagement. Female college students are more likely to report higher engagement based on the amount of study time, efforts on writing, higher order thinking skills, class preparation, and hard work compared to males (Harper et al. 2004). Further, female college students spend more time studying, preparing multiple drafts of term papers, preparing for class presentations, and participating in community-based activities compared to male students (Kinzie et al. 2007). On the other hand, compared to female students, males are more prone to have disrupted attendance patterns (leave college for outside reasons) affecting persistence which in turn affects academic integration into the university (Ewert 2012). Furthermore, male college students are less likely to prepare for class and are more prone to engage in non-academic behaviors such as relaxing, socializing, exercising, and other extracurricular activities compared to female college students (Kinzie et al. 2007). All-male groups outperformed all-female groups on performance criteria involving the MarkStrat simulation (Gochenouer, Eby ad Evans 2019), and male business students seem to outperform female students in describing basic business concepts presented in core business classes (Hornaday, Wheatley and Hunt 1989). Finally, male students are highly engaging with instructors and peers pertaining to career plans, performances, and collaboration with teams (Schreiber and Yu 2016). Based on these differences among males and females, the following hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 1: Female sales students are more likely to earn pass-fail total activity points compared to male sales students in a sales course.

Hypothesis 2: Female sales students likely require fewer activity points to raise their final course grade to the next level compared to male sales students in a sales course.

Hypothesis 3: Males sales students are less likely to enhance their final sales course grade by earning activity points compared to female sales students in a sales course.

Covid-19 Pandemic and Student Engagement

The arrival of COVID-19 to U.S. college campuses was a cataclysmic event for many students who were sent home to shutter in the middle of the Spring 2020 semester as the pandemic threatened institutional sustainability (Lederman 2020). Students were forced to finish out the semester as asynchronous learning (teaching without any real-time instructor engagement), virtual learning (real-time scheduled lectures online throughout the week), or hybrid learning consisting of both asynchronous and synchronous learning. As anticipated, instructors and administrators had significant concerns relating to student engagement, student mental health and physical well-being, accessibility of online learning platforms and tools, and the ability to effectively communicate with constituencies (Lederman 2020). Several surveys confirmed these apprehensions. Student Experience in the Research University Consortium's survey findings found that virtual learning was expected to lower student motivation for online learning, negatively impact engagement due to a lack of student interaction and communication, and hinder learning ability (Soria, Chirikov, and Jones-White 2020). Dutch college students reported lower motivation due to a lack of social interaction and digital discomfort leading to decreased personal effort and time allotted to studies (Meeter et al. 2020). Another survey showed that 70% of respondents felt that online learning was worse than in-person instruction, and 40% had a worse opinion of their college or university they were attending since the beginning of the pandemic outbreak (Simpson-Scarborough 2020). Finally, undergraduate psychology students who transitioned to an online approach mid-semester purported a decrease in overall course quality (Garris and Fleck 2020).

For many students, the continued stay-at-home orders resulted in financial hardships from job loss, missing out on internships, a lack of supporting resources, higher course workloads, perceived lack of educational value associated with assignments, and emotional challenges (stress, anxiety, loneliness, fear, etc.) (Aguilera-Hermida 2020; Soria, Chirikov, and Jones-White 2020). Students experienced the distress of moving out of on-campus housing to return home to live with family members. In doing so, students experienced difficulties in finding suitable places to study and access adequate WIFI services to attend online classes especially in the rural areas (Gonzalez-Ramirez et al. 2021). A study conducted in the Fall 2020 revealed that 28% of respondents described their household's current financial situation as worse, and 16% reported they were struggling to pay for college as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Center for Community College Student Engagement 2021). In addition, students experienced changes with social connections, motivation, and healthy habits (Gonzalez-Ramirez et al. 2021).

On the other hand, some studies fail to show that the pandemic had a negative impact on student engagement and academic performance. Preliminary data reflecting the shift to virtual teaching in 2020 suggested that student performance in online coursework was relatively unaffected if the instructor had prior experience with online teaching (Orlov et al. 2020). In fact, some educators expected that students would appreciate stay-at-home orders since they could be with family, be extended some flexibility to complete assignments, and be allowed to follow their own schedule without having to be in-class at a designated time (Armstrong-Mensah et al. 2020). It could be expected that since many students were away from the normal distractions of social and entertainment activities at college (e.g., Greek activities, social clubs, collegiate sports events, etc.) and furloughed from local part-time jobs, there would be more time to allocate to school assignments and experiential learning activities. Moreover, in lieu of in-person experiential learning activities (e.g., seminar attendance, meeting with a business, etc.), college instructors could have offered the option to gain course points through virtual experiential learning alternatives. Based on the above discussion, we offer the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Sales students during non-pandemic learning conditions are more likely to earn pass-fail activity points than sales students during pandemic learning conditions in a sales course.

Hypothesis 5: Sales students during non-pandemic learning conditions are more likely to raise their final course grade to the next level than sales students during pandemic learning conditions in a sales course.

Hypothesis 6: Sales students during pandemic learning conditions in a sales course are less likely to enhance their final sales course grade than sales students during non-pandemic learning conditions.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 280 undergraduate business students participated in an advanced sales course over eight semesters (Fall 2017 to Spring 2021) at a Midwestern university. The last three semesters represented time periods that included requirements for shuttering, virtual instruction, social distancing, and indoor face coverings. Each student received a course syllabus with detailed learning objectives, the grading rubric, a schedule of graded assignments, and an overview of the sales topic modules covered. Students were also provided a semester-long listing of optional experiential learning, participation-only activities which are analogous to pass-fail assignments as either the student completed the task or event or did not. All activity points were available to earn based on an established deadline.

Procedures

The course was developed with 1,000 potential total points consisting of 825 points earned by students' performance evaluation (e.g., role plays, written papers, quizzes) and 175 points (17.5% of the total grade) consisting of pass-fail "experiential learning activity" points earned by written weekly reports as communication with the instructor and completion of experiential learning activities/tasks. Reminders for activity points and an updated scorecard were distributed weekly. Furthermore, students were encouraged to participate collectively using a communication account (e.g., GroupMe) of class reminders of deadlines. Additional activities could be added to the list of events based on a proactive discussion with the course instructor. These activity points were divided into two categories representing types of pass-fail experiential learning activities:

1. Weekly Learning Reports (75 points) entailing the submission of a weekly report that captured (1) the student's key learning from both inside and outside the classroom for the week, (2) companies the student was pursuing for full-time employment and (3) student activities performed for fun to balance the academic stress of college. These reports were due by noon on Sunday of each week throughout the semester and were worth a total of 75 points. Any weekly report that was late received a 3-point deduction. Reports that were not submitted were penalized with a 10-point deduction each week. If the report was submitted on time, the student received all points possible for the week.

2. Experiential Learning Activities (100 points) representing the following:

    a. Personal activities were based on an objective of improving personal skills that would ideally become a habit in a future sales career. Specific activities included (1) developing pre-call sales plans for in-class industry speakers, (2) resume and LinkedIn profile reviews with industry recruiters, (3) face-to-face mock interviews with industry recruiters, (4) LinkedIn learning modules for writing formal business letters and emails, and (5) written recaps of university speakers or sales movies with applications to a sales career.

    b. Sales competitions/peer coaching activities focused on (1) involvement in internal and external sales competitions, (2) LinkedIn learning modules on mentoring, (3) peer review of role play performance and a coaching plan, and (4) engagement with alumni and underclassmen mentoring.

    c. Sales program investment activities centered on the professional sales center with the sales advisory board partners and prospective sponsors throughout the semester including participation in golf networking events, career fairs and best-practice sessions on professional etiquette, and mentoring underclassmen in the sales program.

The course syllabus required that students attain experiential learning activities from all three of the aforementioned categories to accumulate up to a maximum of 100 points throughout the semester. To avoid the tendency for the "midnight cram", the student had to attain half of the experiential points by the mid-semester point. Across the first five semesters of data collection as pre-pandemic conditions, the pass-fail, experiential learning activities required a physical, in-person presence at events. However, during the second half of the Spring 2020 semester and during the Fall 2020, these activities were moved to virtual exercises as per COVID-19 pandemic protocols. During the Spring 2021 semester, experiential learning activities were predominantly virtual. Just under half of the instructional lectures in the Spring 2021 were in-person classes on campus as the university began to open up and faculty and students began to receive vaccines.

Study Variables

"Period"	Each subject was assigned a nominal score of "1" to "8" representing the semester the subject completed the course corresponding to the following: "1" represents 2017 Fall semester; "2" represents 2018 Spring; "3" represents 2018 Fall; "4" represents 2019 Spring; "5" represents 2019 Fall: "6" represents 2020 Spring; "7" represents 2020 Fall; and "8" represents Spring 2021. Note, values of 1 to 5 represent pre-pandemic conditions and values of 6 to 8 represent pandemic conditions.
"Gender"	Each subject was assigned a binary number as either male ("1") or female ("0").
"Lost Experiential Learning Points"	A subject's "Lost Experiential Learning Points" were calculated as 100 points (potential experiential learning points) less experiential learning points earned for the semester.
"Lost Weekly Reports Points"	A subject's "Lost Weekly Reports Points" were calculated as 75 points less total weekly activity points earned for the semester.
"Total Lost Activity Points"	A subject's "Total Lost Activity Points" was calculated as the summation of "Lost Experiential Learning Points" and "Lost Weekly Reports Points".
"Points from Next Grade"	A subject's "Points From Next Grade" are course points required to raise a subject's course letter grade to the next level (e.g., points required to raise a semester letter grade from B+ to A-). Also known as "points left on the table" to raise a grade to next level.
"Upgrade"	Each subject was assigned to one of two groups (as "1" or "0") where "1" represents subject could upgrade to a higher semester letter grade by completing activity points and "0" represents student could not improve their semester letter grade by completing activity points.
"Pandemic"	Each subject was assigned to either "course completed pre-pandemic – Fall 2017 to Fall 2019" and coded as "1" or "course completed under pandemic conditions – Spring 2020 to Spring 2021" and coded as "0".

Statistical Analysis

The authors were interested in determining whether Gender (male/female) and Pandemic (before-pandemic/in-pandemic conditions) as independent variables had an effect on (1) a student's likelihood of earning pass-fail total course activity points in a sales course, (2) whether a student could improve his/her course grade by completing activity points that were left on the table, and (3) whether a student could raise his/her grade to a higher semester letter grade by completing activity points. This study assesses the effects of two independent, binary variables as Gender and Pandemic on two dependent, continuous variables which are Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade. In addition, this study tests the association between Gender and Pandemic with Upgrade. In testing the hypotheses, the authors use Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) which is defined as "a dependence technique that

measures the differences of two or more metric dependent variables based on a set of categorical (nonmetric) variables acting as independent variables" (Hair et al. 2019, p. 371). Second, cross-tabulations are used to show observed versus expected frequencies of variables, and a Pearson chi-square test is used to assess independence between two categorical variables (Norusis 1993). Third, a correlation analysis, which measures the strength of association between two continuous variables (Norusis 1993), is used to test for multicollinearity between Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade which serve as dependent variables. Finally, t-test analysis is used to assess whether the means for two groups of subjects are equal, and simple factorial analysis of variance serves to test whether the means of several groups of subjects are equal (Norusis 1993).

RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

Of the total 280 students, there were 41 students (14.6%) who met all requirements and received 100% of the available 175 pass-fail activity points. So how important would the lost activity points have been with the remaining 85% of students (n = 239) who failed to receive all available activity points? A review of student performance compared the difference between the number of total points for the course, including evaluated student work for a grade and pass-fail activity points earned, and the number of points needed to move a student up the grading scale. For example, a student earning 888 total points would need 12 points to move from a B+ to an A- on the grading scale. See Table 1. This difference was then compared to the number of activity points not earned during the semester. For example, if a student earned 160/175 points, then he/she left 15 points on the table. Hence, if the student would have completed additional weekly reports or experiential learning activities that were evaluated as pass-fail and earned the 15 points, they would have added 15 points to the original 888 points to 903 and would have improved his/her final grade from a B+ to an A-. Of the 239 students, who failed to reach 100% of all activity points, 59.8% could have improved their semester grade or "upgraded".

Table 1
Course Grading Scale

	93-100%	930-1000 Points
A-	90-92	900-929
B+	87-89	870-899
B	83-86	830-869
B-	80-82	800-829
C+	77-79	770-799
C	70-76	700-769
D	60-69	600-699

Of the 41 students who met all requirements and received 100% of the available 175 pass-fail activity points, 16 were male students showing an 8.8% incidence rate within the total male student population (16 of a total of 181 male students). Furthermore, there were 25 of 99 total female students who earned all activity points representing a 25.0% incidence rate. Hence, female students were approximately three times more likely to earn the full available activity points compared to male students (8.8% versus 26.0%). A chi-square analysis between "Gender" and "Received All Possible Points" indicated a statistically significant interaction (X^2(1, N=280) = 13.79, p = .00). See Table 2 showing a break-out of gender by percentage of students who could upgrade final course grade and Table 3 revealing the results of the chi-square analysis between Gender and Received All Possible Points.

In our sample, there were 239 students who failed to receive 100 percent of total activity points (175 points) split out as 165 male students (91.1% of the total 181 male population) and 74 female students (74.8% of the total 99 female population). See Tables 2 and 3. Of those 165 male students who did not attain 100% of the pass-fail activity points, 115 male students (69.7.% of the 165 males) could have upgraded their final course grade by earning additional pass-fail points that were left on the table. Furthermore, those 115 male students who could have upgraded their final course grade lost an average of 44.6 total points during the semester. The range of pass-fail Points From Next Grade was between 1 and 55 points with an average of 16.9 points per male student. Nearly half (49% of the 115 male students) could have raised their course grade to the next level by merely earning up to 15 additional pass-fail points.

Table 2
Frequency Table of Activity Points Impact

Term	Sex	Total Students	Students Who Earned All Pass-Fail Activity Points	Potentially Impacted by Earning All Pass-Fail Activity Points	Students Who Could Upgrade Final Course Grade	Percentage of Students Who Lost Points and Could Upgrade Final Course Grade
Fall 2017	MEN	27	2	25	20	80.0%
	WOMEN	12	3	9	2	22.2%
Spring 2018	MEN	25	1	24	15	62.5%
	WOMEN	15	4	11	4	36.4%
Fall 2018	MEN	19	0	19	19	100%
	WOMEN	13	3	10	4	40.0%
Spring 2019	MEN	29	1	28	19	67.9%
	WOMEN	11	4	7	1	14.3%
Fall 2019	MEN	21	4	17	11	64.7%
	WOMEN	12	3	9	6	66.7%
Spring 2020	MEN	24	2	22	14	63.6%
	WOMEN	16	2	14	7	50.0%
Fall 2020	MEN	27	5	22	13	59.1%
	WOMEN	10	3	7	1	14.3%
Spring 2021	MEN	9	1	8	4	50.0%
	WOMEN	10	3	7	3	42.9%
TTL	MEN	181	16	165	115	69.7%
	WOMEN	99	25	74	28	37.8%
		280	41	239	143	59.8%

Table 3
Cross Tabulation: Gender by Received 100% of Total Points

	Females	Males	Total
100% of Points	25	16	41
< 100% of Points	74	165	239
Total	99	181	280

$(X^2(1, N=280)= 13.79, p = .00)$

In a similar analysis, the results showed there were 74 female students who did not attain 100% of the pass-fail activity points of which 28 students (37.8% of the 74 females) could have improved their overall course grade. Those 28 female students lost an average of 44.4 points during the course which is nearly the same for the 115 male students ($\bar{x}$=44.6 points). The range of pass-fail Points From Next Grade was between 1 and 30 points with an average of 12.6 points per female student. Nearly half (46%) of the 28 female students could have raised their course grade to the next level by merely earning up to 9 additional pass-fail points.

From this observation, it is suggested that male students are nearly twice as likely not to upgrade their final course grade by earning more pass-fail activity points than female students. Overall, there were 143 male and female students,

representing 51% of the total sample of 280 students, who could have improved their semester grade by completing more pass-fail activities. Of those 143 students, 80.4% were male students and 19.6% were female students.

Impact of Gender and Pandemic on Student Performance

The authors identified multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance calculations in SPSS 28 and compared the resulting Mahalanobis distances to a chi-square distribution with equivalent degrees of freedom (Statistics Solutions 2021). Two outliers were identified and omitted leaving a test sample of 278 subjects for our multivariate analysis. A correlation analysis between Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade (as dependent variables) yielded a moderate correlation ($r(1) = .447$, $p = .00$) suggesting a lack of multicollinearity.

Next, the authors assessed the MANOVA model consisting of Gender and Pandemic as binary main effects with Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade as the dependent variables. The results suggest that the model meets the assumptions for equality of covariance (Box's M = 4.19 ($F(9,$

183473.8) = .46, $p = .90$)) and for equality of error variance for Total Lost Activity Points (Levene's $F(3, 274) = .729$, $p = .54$) and for Points From Next Grade (Levene's $F(3, 274) = 1.29$, $p = .28$). Gender is shown to have a significant impact on both dependent variables (Hotelling's T = .09, $F(2, 273) = 12.50$, $p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$), however, Pandemic fails to have a significant impact (Hotelling's T = .01, $F(2, 273) = .97$, $p = .38$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$). The interaction effect (Gender x Pandemic) also has an insignificant influence on both dependent variables (Hotelling's T = .00, $F(2,273) = .47$, $p = .62$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$).

Next, a post-hoc simple factorial analysis of variance was conducted to assess the effects of Gender and Pandemic as independent variables on Total Lost Activity Points as the dependent variable. The Levene Test of Equality of Error Variance was insignificant (Levene's $F(3, 274) = .73$, $p = .54$) indicating the model meets the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Gender has a significant effect on Total Lost Activity Points ($F(1) = 15.82$, $p = .00$) while Pandemic fails to have a significant impact ($F(1) = 1.89$, $p = .17$). Further, the interaction between Gender and Pandemic (Gender x Pandemic) is also insignificant ($F(1) = .42$, $p = .52$). See Table 4 for results.

Table 4
ANOVA: Effects of Gender and Pandemic on Total Lost Activity Points

		Mean	S.D.	N
Female	**Pandemic**	16.06	20.41	36
	Non-Pandemic	18.27	23.33	63
	Total	17.46	22.23	99
Male	**Pandemic**	26.25	23.80	60
	Non-Pandemic	32.45	24.02	119
	Total	30.37	24.06	179
Total	**Pandemic**	22.43	23.02	96
	Non-Pandemic	27.54	24.67	182
	Total	25.78	24.19	278

Dependent Variable: Total Lost Activity Points

Independent Variable	DF	F-Value	Sig.
Gender	1	15.81	0.00
Pandemic	1	1.89	0.17
Gender x Pandemic	1	0.423	0.52

Levene F(3, 274) = .73, p =.54

In like manner, a post-hoc simple factorial analysis of variance was conducted to assess the effects of Gender and Pandemic as independent variables on Points From Next Grade as the dependent variable. The Levene Test of Equality of Error Variance was insignificant (Levene's $F(3,274) = 1.29$, p = .28) indicating the model meets the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Gender has a significant effect on Points From Next Grade ($F(1) = 19.18$, p = .00) while Pandemic fails to have a significant impact ($F(1) = .58$, p = .45). The interaction between Gender and Pandemic (Gender x Pandemic) is also insignificant ($F(1) = .85$, p = .36). Table 5 shows these results.

Table 5
ANOVA: Effects of Gender and Pandemic on Points From Next Grade

		Mean	**S.D.**	**N**
Female	**Pandemic**	7.39	9.45	36
	Non-Pandemic	7.16	10.48	63
	Total	7.24	10.07	99
Male	**Pandemic**	12.33	11.46	60
	Non-Pandemic	14.75	11.26	119
	Total	13.94	11.35	179
Total	**Pandemic**	10.48	10.97	96
	Non-Pandemic	12.12	11.55	182
	Total	11.55	11.36	278

Dependent Variable: Points From Next Grade

Independent Variable	**DF**	**F-Value**	**Sig.**
Gender	1	19.18	0.00
Pandemic	1	.583	0.45
Gender x Pandemic	1	.854	0.36

Levene $F(3, 274) = 1.29$, p =.28

Student Gender's Effects on Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade

In testing Hypothesis 1, the MANOVA model indicates that the mean for Total Lost Activity Points for female students ($\bar{x}=17.46$, SD=22.23, n = 99) is lower than the mean for male students ($\bar{x}=30.37$, SD=24.06, n = 179) with statistical significance ($F(1) = 15.81$, p = .00, partial $\eta^2 = .06$). To test for differences in mean scores on Total Lost Activity Points between male and female students, a post-hoc t-test analysis was conducted. The results show that the assumption for equal variances assumed was met (Levene's $F = 2.51$, p = .11), and there is a statistical significant difference between male and female students for Total Lost Activity Points (t(276)

= 4.40, p = .00). Hence, males are likely to leave more points on the table than females based on calculated mean scores for Total Lost Activity Points yielding support for Hypothesis 1. Second, the results from the MANOVA showed that female students ($\bar{x}=7.24$, SD = 10.07, n = 99) have lower mean scores for Points From Next Grade than male students ($\bar{x}=13.94$, SD = 11.35, n = 179) with statistical significance (F = 19.18, p = .00, partial $\eta^2 = .07$). A follow-up t-test analysis met the assumption for equal variances assumed (Levene's F = 2.94, p = .09) and demonstrated a statistically significant difference between males and females for Points From Next Grade (t(276) = 4.90, p = .00). Therefore, the results support Hypothesis 2. See Table 6.

Table 6
Results of MANOVA Examining Gender as Main Effect

Dependent Variable	Male $\bar{x}$	Female $\bar{x}$	F-Value
Total Lost Activity Points	30.37	17.46	15.81**
Points From Next Grade	13.94	7.24	19.18**

Box's M = 4.19 (F(9, 183473.8) = .46, p = .90))
Hotelling's T = .09, F(2, 273) = 12.50, p = .000, partial η^2 = .08)
** < .01
* < .05

The variables Lost Weekly Reports Points and Lost Experiential Learning Points were also tracked for the eight semesters for the test sample (N=278). These dependent variables can be summed to calculate each subject's score on Total Lost Activity Points. As a post-hoc analysis, we investigated whether the mean scores on Lost Weekly Report Points and Lost Experiential Learning Points statistically differed between males and females. The results demonstrate that female students ($\bar{x}$=12.90,SD=17.41, n = 99) experience fewer Lost Experiential Learning Points than male students ($\bar{x}$=21.82,SD=18.97, n = 179) (t(276) = 3.86, p = .00) with statistical significance. For this analysis, the results show that there is homogeneity of variance between the male and female sub-samples (Levine's F = 2.62, p = .11). Next for the eight semesters, female students ($\bar{x}$=4.57,SD=6.57, n = 99) had fewer Lost Weekly Report Points than male students ($\bar{x}$=8.56,SD=9.72, n = 179) (t (265) = 4.07, p = .00) with statistical significance. For this analysis with Lost Weekly Report Points, there is a lack of homogeneity of variance between the two groups of males and females (Levine's F = 12.97, p = .00), however, SPSS 28 provides a calculated t-value when the variance is unequal between two groups. Both of the t-test analyses in combination provide further support for Hypothesis 1.

COVID-19 Pandemic's Effects on Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade

The authors tested the effect of Pandemic (pre-pandemic/ in-pandemic conditions) on the two dependent variables Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade using MANOVA. The findings show that Pandemic fails to have a significant influence on either Total Lost Activity Points and Points From Next Grade

(Hotelling's T = .01, F(2, 273) = .97 p = .38, partial η^2 = .01). Although the calculated mean scores show that sales students under non-pandemic conditions ($\bar{x}$=27.54, SD = 24.67, n = 182) seem to have a higher average of Total Lost Activity Points than sales students under pandemic conditions ($\bar{x}$=22.43, SD = 23.02, n = 96), the model reveals that Pandemic fails to affect Total Lost Activity Points with statistical significance (F(1) = 1.89, p = .17, partial η^2 = .01). A follow-up t-test analysis met the assumption for equal variances assumed (Levene's F = .58, p = .45) and demonstrated that there is not a significant difference between sales students under non-pandemic conditions compared to students under pandemic conditions for Total Lost Activity Points (t(276) = 1.68, p = .09). Hence, there is a lack of support for Hypothesis 4. The model also reveals that Pandemic fails to affect Points From Next Grade with statistical significance (F(1) = .58, p = .45, partial η^2 = .00) although the scores for sales students under non-pandemic conditions ($\bar{x}$=12.12,SD=11.55, n = 182) seem to have a higher mean score than sales students under pandemic conditions ($\bar{x}$=10.48, SD = 10.97, n = 96). A follow-up t-test analysis met the assumption for equal variances assumed (Levene's F = 3.03, p = .08) and demonstrated that there is not a significant difference between students as non-pandemic compared to students under pandemic conditions for Points From Next Grade (t(276) = 1.15, p = .25). Thus, there is a lack of support for Hypothesis 5. See Table 7 for results.

As a post-hoc analysis, the authors investigated whether the mean scores on Lost Experiential Learning Points and Lost Weekly Report Points differed based on being a non-pandemic and in-pandemic sales student. With Pandemic as the independent variable and Lost

Table 7
Results of MANOVA Examining Pandemic as Main Effect

Dependent Variable	Prior to Pandemic $\bar{x}$	During Pandemic $\bar{x}$	F-Value
Total Lost Activity Points	27.54	22.43	1.89
Points From Next Grade	12.12	10.48	.58

Box's M = 4.19 (F(9, 183473.8) = .46, p = .90))
Hotelling's T = .01, F(2, 273) = .97, p = .38, partial η^2 = .01
** < .01

Experiential Learning Points as the dependent variable, the results demonstrate that in-pandemic sales students ($\bar{x}$=15.07, SD = 16.20, n = 96) experience fewer Lost Experiential Learning Points than non-pandemic sales students ($\bar{x}$=20.52, SD = 19.95, n = 182) with statistical significance (t(230) = 2.46, p = .02). There is a lack of homogeneity of variance between the two groups (Levine's F = 4.51, p = .04), however, SPSS 28 provides a calculated t-value for conditions of unequal variances. Finally, we analyzed Pandemic as the independent variable and Lost Weekly Report Points as the dependent variable showing that non-pandemic students ($\bar{x}$=7.02, SD = 8.52, n = 182) seem to experience fewer Lost Weekly Report Points than pandemic sales students ($\bar{x}$=7.35, SD = 9.71, n = 96), however, while there is equality of variance (Levene's F = 2.40, p = .16), the difference is statistically insignificant (t(276) = -.29, p = .77). In summary, it seems that students during the pandemic time period left fewer Lost Experiential Learning Points on the table than pre-pandemic students. One plausible explanation for this post-hoc finding is that the course instructor moved all experiential learning opportunities to a virtual environment, allowing for flexibility to complete the activities at home or in the dorm versus in-person activities during the pre-pandemic time period.

Further with the test sample (N=278), the authors assessed the interaction between Gender and Upgrade using cross-tabulation and a chi-square test of independence which is used to assess "the hypothesis that two variables of a crosstabulation are independent" (Norusis 1993, p. 206). The results suggest that male students are less likely to raise their grade by earning points associated with pass-fail activities than female students across all eight semesters ($X^2(1)$ = 30.97, p = .00) as shown in Table 8. These results provide support for Hypothesis 3. In like manner, the authors assessed the interaction between Pandemic and Upgrade using cross-tabulation and a chi-square test of independence and found an insignificant interaction between Pandemic and Upgrade ($X^2(1)$ = 2.85, p = .09) as seen in Table 9. Hence, these results fail to provide support for Hypothesis 6.

Table 8
Cross Tabulation of Gender and Upgrade

	No Upgrade	Yes Upgrade	Total
Female Actual Count	71	28	99
Female Expected Count	48.8	50.2	99
Male Actual Count	66	113	179
Male Expected Count	88.2	90.8	179
Total Actual Count	137	141	278
Total Expected Count	137	141	278

($X^2(1)$ = 30.97, p = .00)

Table 9
Cross Tabulation of Pandemic and Upgrade

	No Upgrade	Yes Upgrade	Total
Pandemic Actual Count	54	42	96
Pandemic Expected Count	47.3	48.7	96
Pandemic Actual Count	83	99	182
Pandemic Expected Count	89.7	92.3	182
Total Actual Count	137	141	278
Total Expected Count	137	141	278

$(X^2(1) = 2.85, p = .09)$

Finally, a crucial question is whether virtual experiential learning activities during the pandemic would enhance or reduce student engagement? While the sample size for the Fall 2020 was small (n = 37), the data in the first eight weeks of the semester showed 81% (30/37) of the students collected half of the points for the semester (range 30-100, avg. 68.7/100) indicating a shift towards completing opportunities to earn points and potentially having a better course outcome. It could be assumed that pandemic restrictions and limiting personal interaction, enhanced the priority (task value) of the events and provided simply "something different to do" while sitting in the college dorm or at home. But would this behavior continue? By the end of the Fall 2020 semester, students' behavior reverted back to previous semesters with nearly half of students not collecting all pass-fail activity points (59.1% men; 14.3% female). This finding tracks with Dostaler, Robinson and Tomberlin's (2017) results demonstrating that student engagement is highest early during a course term, but wanes over time as student absenteeism and disengagement increases.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS TO SALES STUDENT MOTIVATION

First in this study, sales students were provided opportunities to earn course points by completing non-evaluated activities outside of class. The most consistent finding is that nearly 60% of sales students each semester could have improved their final grade by merely completing non-evaluated activities during the semester. Male students were nearly two times more likely not to change their grade by earning all non-evaluated activity points than female students. In light of previous research, this finding is not unexpected. Dayioglu and Turut-Asik (2007) found that female

students have better class attendance, study skills, and motivation to perform compared to males, and D'Lima, Winsler, and Kitsantas (2014) show first semester college male students have lower extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, lower mastery orientation, and lower GPAs compared to female students. This study's results suggest Gen Z undergraduate students taking an advanced sales course potentially experience challenges with time management, clarity of task assignments, and self-regulation. Moreover, female students are more likely to earn activity points compared to male students supporting a possible gender difference for performance in a sales course.

A sales course instructor's use of pass-fail experiential learning activities should not be deterred based on this study's students choosing not to complete activities and gaining course points. The composition of the activity points in the sales course include submissions of weekly reports and numerous personal developmental activities which are meant to emulate responsibilities as a salesperson in post-graduation, entry-level sales positions. Weekly sales reports submitted to the sales manager are meant to keep a new sales representative on task around company administration, product knowledge, sales training, and business development activities. Hence, sales representatives have a personal choice as to whether they complete and submit weekly activity reports for sales management. Albeit, failure to comply with requested weekly reporting in the new sales position may have significant consequences such as reprimands, lower commissions/bonuses or involuntary termination. In the sales course, the student suffered the consequences of not submitting weekly reports as fewer total activity points leading to a lower course

grade. Furthermore, completing weekly reports helps sales representatives to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses and to consider additional training, sales activities, and networking connections to better their selling skills. In like manner, weekly reports have the same types of personal effects on sales students during a sales course. While it is likely that these types of activities are not graded within the job, voluntary participation provides sales managers with data on the sales representative's commitment to personal development and skill differentiation. Since it is the instructor's intent to better prepare the sales student for the workforce post-graduation, activity points should be voluntary as pass/fail choices in the classroom with individual instructor coaching on real-world consequences of a student's decisions and motivation.

A common thread throughout the literature is that Gen Z college students are unique and "act, think and work differently from any previous generation" (adapted from Sladek and Grabinger 2014, p.2). Although making generalizations to generational cohorts can lead to falsities and misinterpretations (Maloni, Hiatt, and Campbell 2019), it is suggested that Gen Z students have shorter attention spans, rely on social media for news, lack critical thinking skills (McNally and Stagliano 2019; Rue 2018), are poor time managers, lack self-awareness, distrust authorities including instructors, and demand customized course curricula (Clark, Howley and Swatt 2018). Once in the workforce, some Gen Z students could be maladaptive to working with older generational cohorts, shun commitment and formality, be overly confident, and prefer informal learning (Bencsik and Machova 2016; Rodriquez et al. 2019). Moreover, many Gen Z students are kinesthetic learners and rely on experientially learning through task performance and interaction with others (Othman et al. 2019).

College professors should adapt their teaching styles as many Gen Z students perceive that traditional education is missing the mark in preparing students for the workplace (Kronos Inc. 2019; Strada-Gallup 2018) which also certainly includes business coursework. Many students believe instructors speak in an outdated, pre-digital age language (Prensky 2001) and desire avoiding engaging with the instructor when similar information is obtained on the internet or through social media (Rue 2018). Gen

Z students legitimize coursework if instructors discuss how assignments develop workplace competencies versus theoretical discussions with little application within the first job. Gen Z students prefer discussions surrounding current events that are applicable to course content, use of outside speakers who practice the art of selling, technology-based knowledge acquisition, collaboratively developed syllabi, and assignments requiring critical thinking (Maloni, Hiatt, and Campbell 2019). Alternative methods of instruction impacting the Gen Z could entail storytelling, certificate programs, employer involvement in curriculum development, experiential learning (co-ops, internships, class projects), online and blended course offerings, competitive events ("shark tank"), and short-term boot camps (Schwieger and Ladwig 2018).

With past research of the Gen Z cohort again reinforced by this current study, instructors need to recalibrate and reimagine how non-evaluated activities are presented and directly connect the task to positive behaviors that will be a part of the student's work in industry and career. Pandemic restrictions may have provided "more time" to students to complete course activities in some cases, but still nearly half chose not to complete activity points likely because it was not a priority, did not see value of completing the task or were distracted. Hence, instructors must consistently demonstrate the value by showing application in a post-graduation sales assignment. Some considerations of more effectively communicating the value of course assignments may include:

1. Record and post a video explaining the non-evaluated events with comments and industry partners/class alumni testimonials linking the value of the activities with a student's sales career. This option would be most relevant for virtual learning approaches and should be included during the class introduction to highlight alumni testimonials stating the value of experiential learning activities brought to individual careers. While student engagement with experiential learning activities is never guaranteed, intuitively students would be more inclined to watch a promotional video with alumni and practitioners at the beginning of the course to guide engagement decisions.

2. Create student accountability partnerships within the class to promote activity completion. In post-class feedback, students stated they needed reminders or more engagement with other classmates regarding the task to be completed. On other class projects, student teams have served as accountability partners to remind of project deadlines or to work jointly on task completion. One suggestion would be to group students to foster this accountability for activity points as well.

3. Create individual or team competition with a leaderboard for non-evaluated activities and allow social media posts for recognition.

4. For weekly reports, incentivize class participation with a team goal of 100% completion (e.g., lunch reward or team-building activity).

5. Since there is a tendency for male students to disengage, instructors should emphasize participation and coach male students on task prioritization to complete experiential learning activities that are pass-fail throughout the sales course.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While these results provide interesting insights into student motivation to complete pass-fail experiential learning activities within a sales course, there are several limitations. First, the findings are reflective of eight semesters in one sales course at a single university. Presently, there are 147 U.S. business schools with recognized professional selling programs that may include courses with a sales concentration, online sales classes, programs with sales certifications, classes covering customer relationship management systems (CRM), sales internships, sales faculty, sales student job placement, or sales labs (Sales Education Foundation 2021). Future research efforts should focus on whether similar patterns of student motivation to complete pass-fail activity points exist within other business schools at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Second, the same instructor taught the course for each data collection period (semester). It is noted that student clarity and understanding for value-added assignments remain the responsibility of the instructor. In the progression of this sales course across eight semesters, there is evidence that the instructor was effective and clearly communicated the task value and need to complete the experiential learning activities. Student evaluations for instructor effectiveness averaged slightly higher than the marketing department as a whole for the time period of the study, and student comments support that the instructor was motivating to complete experiential activities. For example, one subject told the instructor, "I think your activity points provide many great opportunities for students" while another student expressed, "I feel like you do a great job providing different opportunities for students to learn from! I like how all the opportunities targeted a different thing which was nice for the students." Again, student performance data with a different instructor would shed light on whether there is a general trend supporting a lack of student engagement to complete pass-fail activity points. Third, while the course expectations where static, the value-added assignments continuously evolved during the total time period of eight semesters to reflect class dynamics and outside industry involvement. Additional inquiry could be conducted using a control sample (consistent syllabus and activities) compared to an experimental sample (consistent syllabus and various changes to activities) to assess whether differences in the types of activities affected student engagement. Key research questions to guide future research could center on how instructors teach, coach, encourage and motivate undergraduate sales students to improve their personal selling skills. Other essential areas of inquiry could encompass student motivation in a sales course tied to seeing value in the skill acquisition or based on decisions surrounding time management and assessment of priorities. Assessing the core reasons for a lack of completing pass-fail activities for points could be explored linking the method of presenting the need to complete activities for points or to perceptions that activities are outdated compared to current pedagogical approaches. Sales instructors may need more direction or a redefined purpose of experiential learning activities that would enhance a sales student's career success. These questions asked by sales instructors looking to maximize the impact of educational events for their classes rarely find consistent answers as each class has unique needs and dynamics.

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