

# Reflective Teaching Portfolio

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## Background

Reflecting on my work experience I find that there is a thread of commonality that runs through my background. At Shearman & Sterling, an international law firm, I was responsible for client accounts billing. Not only was I responsible for the day-to-day billing of the department, which averaged over \$700,000 annually, I was innovative in creating client responses to inquiries about billing, adapting the client account number to include a sort mechanism to identify similar transactions, and created a training program designed to have the administrative staff become more involved in the billing. At Lehman Brothers, I developed a training program for newly hired MBAs. To have them “hit the ground” running, I created manuals for them to understand the underwriting process for equity and debt financings procedures as they were done at Lehman and their responsibilities to complete the financings.

While studying for my MBA I was asked to make presentations in Business Law and in Finance. I remember thinking wouldn't it be fun to teach at the college level. And here I am, teaching entrepreneurship which relies heavily upon my experience at Lehman Brothers. I share my experiences from Lehman and my experiences in establishing a company with my students to make it more realistic and relevant.

In 1991 I co-founded a television station for the Arabic audience. That experience really impressed in me the application of my learning for the MBA. Accounting and Finance became real and I understood what cash flow really meant and in projecting sales.

In 1999, I started teaching at FIT's Enterprise Center with a noncredit course, Financing Strategies. About one year later, Chris Helm asked if I would teach BE 261 Starting Your Business, a 3-credit course. A few years later, I heard that the school was considering introducing online teaching. I asked if I could be considered for that program. At that time, the school was considering Lotus software. And now I am teaching three sections of BE261OL as well as CEO001, 002OL AND 003OL in Blackboard.

## My Teaching Philosophy

When I first started teaching I thought how am I going to teach what I know to my students. How can I relate to them? I remembered my professors in business school and how they taught; they were good and effective, and why not use the same style in my classroom. I used the Socratic method of delivering the lessons, asking critical thinking questions of the students and using the blackboard for notes. My BE course consists of marketing, management, finance and accounting. I soon realized that my students were visual and just glared when I lectured them. I had to do something to keep their attention other than writing on the blackboard. I realized that their attention was more focused when I told stories about that day's lesson and tried my best at humor. I challenged them with questions on how they would manage an issue or what they would do to control their company's money, for example. Sometimes reception was lukewarm and other times there was animated discussion.

When FIT added computers to the classroom lectern, I realized that I could use videos to explain a certain point or financial document. I searched for videos which would explain relevant concepts. I found

resources like Cornell's Clips and Stanford's interviews with CEOs of companies. It was interesting to use Stanford's videos because their format was that of an interview with the senior manager of a company. I could search for these videos by company or speaker which made them more relevant to the topic and the garment/manufacturing industry which the students were interested in. There was no Mashups or YouTube videos in the early 2000s at that time. I brought in my videos on a thumb drive and quickly learned how to present them in class and in timing with my lectures. It certainly was a challenge to set up the computer in the classroom and have it operating properly. The students liked the videos and told me they would like more of them.

I had a wonderful experience in creating a business, and thought that I must share that experience with my students, especially since the topic I am teaching was so related. Therefore, I began writing the story of how I co-founded a television business with my former partner. The students would see how starting a business has its great moments as well as troubled times to keep it going.

I would gain something by doing this as well, developing my writing skills. Now, my assigned reading for my classes is my book, Love and War, The Human Side of Business, The Tale of The Arabic Channel (2012). The book discusses the journey in establishing a business and the environmental effects and cultural aspects on the business. The history of the business included the uncontrollable variables such as how the revenues were impacted by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the resultant prejudices that developed against the Muslim community.

One of the things I have learned from my students is that they like to remain connected. I join them on Linked-In and respond to their emails. In the same vein, I decided to write a blog letting my students know that I have information in that blog that may help them with their businesses post-graduation. My readers are encouraged to comment on my articles and to ask questions they may have. My blog [www.smallbusinessgurusite.com](http://www.smallbusinessgurusite.com) contains my essays on various aspects of managing a business. To develop my readership, I use Twitter to post my recent articles to gain new followers.

### **Successful Lessons**

I often thought "how am I going to make the financial documentation lectures easier to understand? How can I relate the lesson to the students in a more personal way"? I looked at the Cash Flow lecture and realized that comparing it to the student's personal checkbook was a terrific way to explain the elements of cash flow. It made it easier for them to understand. It was successful, and several students in that class wrote on my evaluation that I made it easy to understand the concepts.

Another successful lesson was concerning my own satisfaction. One of the students had asked me a question that was so advanced for the class, I waited a few seconds thinking about the answer before responding. I answered his question in such a way that the entire class would understand, and thought where did that answer come from. It was stored somewhere in the back of my brain and came forward to respond. The challenge was very satisfying for me.

An experience I truly enjoyed was mentoring students of the DENYC classes of 2012 through 2015. Meeting the designers and being able to speak to them about their businesses and their designs was memorable. I offered solutions to their manufacturing issues, advised them on venture capital financing and the proper time to seek it, and encouraged them to continue to excel. I mentored the following

students, among others: Mimi Plange, Karina Kallio, Marcia Budet, Becca McCharen and Vasumathi Soundararajan.

### **Use of Technology in My Classes**

With my transitioning to teaching online and the further development of online teaching in the SUNY system, there came a simpler and more effective way to incorporate video clips in my lectures.

With the Mashups key one can access videos managed by YouTube and searchable by topic, pictures with Flickr, presentations with SlideShare, and the further instruction of topics with Lynda.com. The YouTube library of videos has expanded over the years since I started using them with Lotus and contains clips that can be relevant and on topic. My choices are videos that are most relevant to my lectures and are easy to understand. My BE courses and the CEO courses I teach contain many videos that are easily understood by both foreign students and American students.

At the end of the semester, some of them express their gratitude for the videos and making it easier for them to understand the concepts. Using videos, links and pictures makes the website look so professional and, most of all, interesting.

I believe it is even more important to have created an interesting experience for students by having illustrations of concepts and additional information by including PowerPoint presentations, pictures as well as the videos. Links to various sources such as Entrepreneur and Inc magazines are important so that the student can see what the business community is currently focused on. To make it easier for students to do market research and find information for the business plan project I assign for the end of the course, I have included the link to the FIT Digital Library with Libguides.

### **Future Challenges with Technology**

My goal is to include Voice Threads with my summer courses to test how receptive they will be with the students. It will require me to write the scripts and questions for the Voice Thread as well as prepare illustrations on slides.

I will continue to search Lynda.com for instructional lessons relative to my courses.

My aim for my courses is to make them a more enjoyable experience for the students and to develop interest and curiosity about the subjects I teach.

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