Land that job: Teaching students to find company information for interview preparation

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Abstract

In the Fall of 2012 and Spring of 2013, I taught undergraduate supply chain management students and first year MBA students how to use library databases to find company information in preparation for interviews.

When developing the activities for these classes, I wanted to move away from the idea of "teaching the database" and instead ask students to think critically about the relative strengths and weaknesses of different sources of company information.

Technology



The classroom management tool LanSchool was used to improve the flow of the students' group presentations.

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In the Beginning there was Brainstorming (and it was good)

At the beginning of both classes, students were asked to brainstorm about what kinds of information they might like to know about a company before an interview. They were then asked to think about some possible places they could search to find the information they might need. When listing places they would search, students would invariably mention Google, the company's website, and sometimes free online sites like Glassdoor.com. These answers naturally segued into a discussion of bias and the authority of information found online when compared to information found in proprietary databases. The five to ten minutes it took to perform this brainstorming exercise served as a great way to get students warmed up to the idea of participating in class discussions.

SCMN 4810: A Structured Approach

SCAIN 4310 What does it feet? Searching for Company Information Using Library
Distributes and Groups

Wholes a prose, you will be expected a resulted to search the distribution shelded to housest soon. Answer
for question shelders have been of your deline. A prayment by present profession by the date.
Name of forecase:

1. Includes whether our of the information below is sizing our remarks. If it is satisfied, indicate where you be noted to shimmation.

4. Care you find hybrider Assess in a publicly or principly swell company using our remarks.

5. In your remarks, can you find determation on the industrion Ansass operates in?

6. Can you find you would not determation on the industrion Ansass operates in?

6. Can you find not see a reliable door Ansass using your remounce?

6. Can you find a find industrial reage profesh and service?

6. In your would in distinction of the industrial history to provide the ground in the respective of the provides of Ansassin super profesh and service?

6. In your door in distinction of Ansassin forecast in your resource?

9. In forecast information should feasons found in your resource?

2. In the did you think was the grantest design of your resource?

After the brainstorming session, students were given a brief demo of Hoover's in order to acclimate them to how one library resource presented company information.

Ingredients:

- 4 Groups
- 4 Resources (Hoover's, LexisNexis, Business Source Premier, and Google)
- Mostly "close-ended" questions

A few open ended questions allowed students to think critically about what worked and what didn't for their assigned resource.

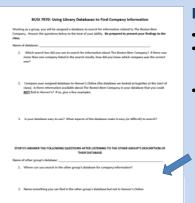
Business

After finishing the worksheet, groups presented on how to find different pieces information in their resource and shared their opinions about their tool. On a whiteboard, this chart was filled out in order to keep track of what resources had different kinds of data.

	Hoover's	LexisNexis	Source Premier	Google
Public/Private	Yes	Yes	Kinda	Kinda
Industry Info.	Yes!	A little	A little	Yes, but
Mission Statement	No	No	No	Yes
News	Yes	Yes!	Yes	Yes!
Competitors	Yes!	Yes	Yes	Yes
Major Products	Yes!	A little	Yes	Yes, but
Mergers & Acquisitions	No	Yes	No	Yes
Financials	Yes!	Yes!	Yes	Yes

BUSI 7970: Freedom to Explore

For this class, the instructor wanted to focus only on resources provided by the library for finding company information. So after the brainstorming session at the beginning of class, we jumped right into searching Hoover's for information about The Boston Beer Company.



Ingredients:

- 2 Groups
- 3 Databases: (Hoover's, LexisNexis, and Business Source Premier)
- Mostly open-ended questions

To insure that students paid attention to the other group's presentation, they were required to answer some questions about the other group's database.

Conclusion

The two activities both worked well at getting students to debate the advantages and disadvantages of different search tools. The open ended questions included in both activities promoted discussion and the use of LanSchool kept the student presentations from taking too long. All in all, the activities were successful in engaging students and promoted students teaching one another.