One glimmer of good news today is that business investment remains strong in this challenged economy, according to the most recent report from the Richmond Federal Reserve (September, 2011). Two reasons are cited for improved productivity and growth: 1) exports from emerging economies such as India, Brazil and China, and 2) the potential for U.S. consumer spending. Many marketing and sales executives from area corporations such as Verizon, Capital One, MeadWestvaco, Altria, and DuPont tell me that they are continually seeking new ways to create value solutions for their clients to stay competitive in the U.S and globally.

It is through the design of new products and services that firms create value for their customers. Roger Martin in his book *The Design of Business* (2009) argues that firms as different as Apple and McDonald’s have thrived in a recessionary or struggling economy due to their innovations in products and services or through efficiencies in their processes.

Of course, marketing contributes in the analysis, creativity of design and sales processes. These skill sets and knowledge are offered through marketing courses, programs such as the da Vinci Center, internships and participation in student organizations such as the American Marketing Association student chapter at VCU. In this issue, you will find information about the ways universities create value through research, teaching and engagement with the business community. Get involved and stay competitive.
What attracted you to the VCU School of Business?

There are a number of factors that I found attractive about the VCU School of Business. I was excited about the opportunity to work with the marketing faculty and really appreciated their interest in my background and my business-to-business (B2B)/branding research in particular. I also wanted to be a part of the growth and momentum here. From a personal standpoint, I am actually returning home, as I grew up in Alexandria, VA and attended the University of Virginia.

How did you become interested in brand strategy, business-to-business (B2B) marketing, and product management?

I have had an interest and passion for marketing for years, certainly since my earlier career in brand management at The Coca-Cola Company. When I made the recent transition to academia, I saw an opportunity to make a real contribution in the branding area and specifically the B2B branding area. The fact is that B2B branding is relatively understudied and misunderstood compared to consumer branding. Many B2B managers still have not fully accepted the value of branding, and those that do see the value in branding often lack the resources and sophistication to optimize their brand investments.

You have published or have forthcoming articles in academic journals including the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, the *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, the *Journal of Business Research*, and *Industrial Marketing Management*. What are you working on now?

My research tends to focus on the nuances of B2B branding compared with consumer branding. I am generally intrigued by the distinctions between the two domains and how those distinctions influence brand strategy. More specifically, my research asks questions related to when and why brands matter more or less in B2B contexts. For example, does the level of perceived risk or the importance or complexity of a purchase influence receptivity to brand information in an organization’s purchase decision?

Currently, I am working on a project that assesses the effectiveness of social media messages in B2B contexts. While many B2B marketers are trying social media tools, many of them do not know how to take advantage of this new phenomenon. My co-authors and I are in the process of analyzing the Facebook and Twitter posts of Fortune 500 companies to gauge their social media usage, compare the usage of B2B marketers to their B2C counterparts, and determine the factors most likely to lead to the effective utilization of social media.

Ultimately, this study should offer guidance to B2B marketing managers regarding social media strategies and their successful execution.

To what do you attribute the current interest in branding? What does the public need to understand about it?

I think some of the growing interest in branding can be attributed to increased global competition and the current economy. Companies realize that they must differentiate themselves in a meaningful way in order to survive and thrive. Brand management is certainly one way to accomplish this objective, as evidenced by the success of companies that have invested in branding. What companies, and the public in general, need to recognize is that brand-building is a long-term investment and should be treated as such.

What do you want marketing students to know?

This may seem obvious, but I want to make sure that students understand what marketing is (and is not) and the value it can bring to any organization. It’s more than glossy advertising campaigns or sales; instead it has everything to do with building value-added relationships with the “right” current and prospective customers as well as various stakeholders, including distributors and suppliers. Additionally, I would like to reinforce the need for strategic thinking skills and analytical rigor, and the necessity to understand and collaborate with various functions throughout the organization.

How does your corporate experience inform your academic work?

I’ve had an opportunity to work for companies including Coke and AT&T, as well as a “dotcom” company and Snapper Power Equipment. These corporate experiences have influenced many of my research ideas and projects, the most notable being my interest in branding. These experiences also are beneficial in the classroom where I frequently offer personal anecdotes that relate to relevant topics and career advice and insights that might help students navigate their careers.
Marketing majors returned to class armed with valuable experience from internships. Senior Kyle Gigliotti’s field sales internship with Altria Group gave him a fresh take on concepts and skills from his marketing classes.

“Relationship marketing principles are used every day in-field,” he says. “It’s not just a term, but a state of mind and frame for action. It’s great to see that the topics taught in class are echoed in the training process of a high-profile firm such as Altria.”

Kyle started out shadowing a territory sales manager on account calls to retail outlets. Later, he was given a business opportunity to research, analyze, and suggest an action plan for. Kyle’s internship also gave him an important insight in career building. “Company culture is really what makes or breaks a career experience. I now believe that students should search less for that “dream job” and instead search for a “dream team” of co-workers that they would enjoy working with,” he says.

Cassandra Harris interned with DuPont Protection Technologies, which creates specialty protective fibers for garments. “In MKTG 302, Professor Franzak had a guest speaker from DuPont who talked about what the company did, and it made me more interested in working for DuPont,” says Cassandra. As a Marketing Communications intern, Cassandra worked on the division’s intranet website and authored an article for Network News, DuPont’s daily newspaper. She credits VCU with helping her find her internship.

“After months of searching online sites such as Monster.com, I finally decided to check out RamsRecruiting, since I had set up an account with them years ago. That’s when I found the position for the Marketing Communications internship for DuPont,” she says. Danika Mansfield agrees.

“I check Darlene Ward’s blog and RamsRecruiting almost as often as I sign into my Facebook,” she says. Her search for an internship led her to The Hodges Partnership, a public relations agency where she worked with clients in the apparel industry. She kept up with their social media, helped with a new product reveal at a boutique, and created a print media list for winter holiday gift guides. “The luxury team will pitch our clients’ products to these contacts,” she says. “Most publications like product submissions by July or August” An early start also applies to internships. “I started looking for a summer internship in early December,” says Danika. “Many companies have early application deadlines, so it’s smart to get your name out there early.”

Information at: blog.vcu.edu/dward

Since fall 2010, Marketing Majors have interned for the following firms:
- Addison Clark Online
- Altria Group
- Ashley Corporation
- Ayers Electronic Systems, LLC
- Briefings Media
- Defense Logistics Agency
- DuPont
- Family and Adolescent Services, LLC
- Fastenal
- Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
- Franklin Street Marketing
- Hodges Partnership
- Organica Water, Inc.
- Richmond Flying Squirrels
- Siddall, Inc
- Style Weekly
- United Health Group
- VCU Business Services
- VCU School of Business Dean’s Office
- Xerox

Executive Panel Speaks to Marketing Majors about Sales Careers

“What is a typical day like for a salesperson?” “How will working in sales today help me develop in my career?” “How did you get into sales?” These and other questions were presented by marketing and other School of Business students to a panel of four senior sales executives the afternoon of Wednesday, September 14th, in the Center for Corporate Education Classroom.

Jump-Start Your Business Career: Exciting Opportunities in Professional Selling featured professionals from several industries who spoke about the selling profession and fielded students’ questions. Bob Willoughby (Cox Media Services), Mark Newfield (Northwestern Mutual Financial), Jim Levon (Fastenal) and Michael Ames (Altria) shared experiences from the front lines of selling and advised students to seriously consider selling as an excellent entry point for their upcoming business careers. Moderated by marketing faculty member Dr. Wayne Slough, the event was co-sponsored by AMA, the Office of Career Services, and the Department of Marketing.
Marketing Department Events

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING
Sales Managers Forum Welcomes Steve Kazanjian VP of Global Creative, MWV

In Relationship Marketing, also often referred to as One-to-One Marketing, products are highly customized for the client. Steve Kazanjian, Vice President of Global Creative for MeadWestvaco, will present an interactive session on Relationship Marketing at the October 28, 2011 VCU Sales Managers Forum. Dr. Van Wood, Professor of Marketing and Phillip Morris Chair of International Business, will moderate. The Sales Managers Forum is comprised of senior sales executives from Richmond, Virginia companies. For more information, contact Dr. Michael Little at 828-3190 / mwlittle@vcu.edu

BREAKING INTO NEW MARKETS: Verizon’s Next Steps in Home Automation

Eric Bruno, Vice President of Product Development for Verizon Telecom, will look at how Verizon Telecom developed and launched a new home monitoring and control solution. As Vice President of Product Development for Verizon Telecom, Eric Bruno is responsible for new product development and product lifecycle management across the consumer and business segments. November 9, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. / Snead Hall B1115 Welcoming reception at 1:30 in Snead Hall Atrium RSVP at mktgdept@vcu.edu or 828-1618

The Department of Marketing welcomes graduate students from Christ University of Bangalore, India. Read about them, and about the VCU / Christ University Partnership, in our next issue!