

Classroom Observation: Wilson Zehr

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Observation: BA 464 – Promotion Strategy, 11-9-2017

On 11-9-2-17 I sat in on Wilson Zehr's Promotion Strategy (BA 464) class. It started with a one hour live, presentation/interview of Trevor Graves, the Founder and CEO of one of Portland's most successful design firms, Nemo Design. Graves, appeared in the class via a video link. He provided the class with excellent insights not only into how one parlays one's passion into a successful business but also valuable life lessons for Zehr's students. The presentation was in the form of a Q&A session, including a tour of Nemo's design headquarters. A number of students eagerly joined the presentation/interview with a variety of questions. Judging by the students' focused attention and their thoughtful questions, it was obvious the class was engaged and learned much from Graves. Bringing leading industry figures from dynamic businesses with whom Zehr has personal connections is a value added feature Zehr brings to EOU and the COB.

Following Graves' presentation, Zehr guided the class to achieve the core outcomes of the class session. Listed below are reflections of my classroom visit.

A. COMMUNICATION SKILLS AS OBSERVED—rated on a scale from 1-5; 5 being high.

- a. Projected voice to be heard easily – 5
- b. Listened to student questions and comments – 5
- c. Presented examples to clarify points – 5
- d. Commanded attention – 5

Wilson Zehr's classroom presence is relaxed and as a result his students are at ease. He commanded their attention by asking the students their reaction/opinion of a topic appropriate to the day's learning outcomes. Students felt comfortable expressing their opinions and in some cases took the discussion in a new direction that led to more critical thinking. Zehr summarized their opinions and related them back to the key learning outcomes and in some cases embellished

the discussion with examples from his career. Overall, class members were involved, respectful of one another's opinions and comfortable in the moment.

B. WHAT WERE THE MOST AND LEAST HELPFUL THINGS THE INSTRUCTOR DID TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY?

Most Helpful: Zehr is an eager listener willing to carefully wait for his turn to respond and/or redirect the discussion. One example of this skill involved discussing how perception/images influence customer purchases. Zehr probed the students for examples of famous products that use this promotional strategy. His inclusion of two French students into the conversation led to a spontaneous presentation/dialogue of how cultural biases influence the discernments of world cultures.

Least Helpful: At times, Zehr talked when students did not respond to a general question. A recommendation is for him to simply call on students who do not participate in a discussion/question to draw them into the exchange.

C. KNOWLEDGE OF AND ENTHUSIASM FOR SUBJECT MATTER AND FOR TEACHING

- a. Presented material appropriate to the stated purpose of the lesson – 5
- b. Demonstrated command of the subject matter – 5
- c. Encouraged student involvement – 5

Based on Zehr's connections to industry leaders such as Trevor Graves, it is obvious that Zehr is willing to go above and beyond the task of simply presenting material to the class. His connection to industry leaders adds worth to his teaching and provides students who would never have an opportunity to meet with CEOs rare and respected learning experiences. In short the students during this observation were not simply involved; rather they were engaged.

D. WHAT CONTENT APPEARED TO BE THE MOST AND THE LEAST SUITABLE TO THE LESSON?

The key content articulated to the students was to find purpose in their lives rather than merely seeking financial gain and success - success and financial gain would follow purpose.

E. ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENTS

- a. Encouraged student discussion – 5
- b. Encouraged students to answer difficult questions – 3
- c. Used questions to determine if students were having difficulty – 4

Zehr was respectful to his students. Their body language clearly indicated they were comfortable with their faculty member and one another. The French students were brought into the discussion and helped steer the conversation into a variety of sensitive topics (gun control) that gave the American students fresh insight into American culture.

F. HOW DID THE INSTRUCTOR SHOW INTEREST IN STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING?

As previously noted, Zehr set the tone with a welcome message and concluded the class with a thank you to his students. His respectful tone and body language was mirrored by his students.