

**UNICON 2006 Living the Brand of Executive Education**  
**November 28-30, 2006**  
**Discussion Session 1: Changing Customer Needs**

Top 5 Customer Trends as Identified by Groups in Breakout Sessions

*The following comments are transcribed verbatim from handwritten originals. Words that were illegible or difficult to read are contained within (parentheses).*

**1. Trend:**

- Faster – fewer days. Cheaper – less expensive. Better – as defined by the customer. Industry-focused. Flexible. Theory-based but adaptable.

**1. Implication:**

- We need to live what we teach: agile, customer-centric.

**2. Trend:**

- More focus on customer issues and problems.

**2. Implication:**

- How far along the continuum of the “after market” consulting do we go?

**3. Trend:**

- Need/request from customers that brings us out of our comfort zone.

**3. Implication:**

- Finding partners to meet customer needs.

**4. Trend:**

- Underlying piece of “purpose of work” and values and meaning of life.

**4. Implication:**

- Finding ways of adding this in even if customer hasn’t verbalized it.

**5. Trend:**

- Demanding to be heard.

**5. Implication:**

- To listen, go out and talk to the customer and be more outward looking.

**6. Trend**

- Helping company find out. Discover the solution. “Discovery.” What the customer doesn’t know.

**6. Implication**

- Finding ways to listen to the customer and not jumping to solution. Spend lots of time learning about the company/customer.

**1. Trend:**

- Desiring more custom programming.

**1. Implication:**

- Faculty constraint, over-booked facilities.

**2. Trend:**

- Running more custom programs off-campus.

**2. Implication:**

- Less convenient for faculty – often take fewer faculty members together to meet/exceed customer expectations. Compromises the overall experience. Can’t control experience.

**3. Trend:**

- Working with top executives to customize developmental leadership programs.

**3. Implication:**

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**4. Trend:**

- Customers want more hand holding – expect more administrative support.

**4. Implication:**

- Takes more resources dedicated to them.

**5. Trend:**

- Desire for shorter programs.

**5. Implication:**

- Longer days; fuller days. More pre-work required - 5 wks out.

**6. Trend**

- More sophisticated marketing - eg. Search engines - and balanced marketing approach/campaign.

**6. Implication**

- Must measure and frequency so you are top of mind.
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**1. Trend:**

- Large cap companies are downsizing, consolidating, and outsourcing. Mid cap also are increasing. What are we doing to serve them?

**1. Implication:**

- New market for many EE providers. How should programs be delivered?

**2. Trend:**

- Customers are partnering with consulting firms and other providers vs. B Schools.

**2. Implication:**

- Increases our competition. Affects pricing models, delivery approaches, etc.

**3. Trend:**

- Companies are becoming more global.

**3. Implication:**

- How do we serve these organizations? Distance Ed., faculty traveling, curriculum design?

**4. Trend:**

- The demographics of the workforce is changing.

**4. Implication:**

- How do we deliver programs to the younger generations who require multi-stimulus and learn differently?

**5. Trend:**

- Some customers want an open enrollment solution - vs. custom - to network, benchmark, etc. and shorter courses - vs. longer ones.

**5. Implication:**

- How can we offer some “customer solutions” to open enrollment participants?
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**1. Trend:**

- Faculty involvement: Preparation/front end. Consulting and follow-up.

**1. Implication:**

- 1. Raises price – preparation and consulting rates. 2. Clients appreciate. 3. Clients

expectations of level of follow-up must be managed. 4. Time and travel implications for faculty.

**2. Trend:**

- Return on investment: 1. Of executive assessment via program work. 2. Action learning. 3. Follow-up.

**2. Implication:**

- 1. Obligation to “fulfill the promise.” 2. Challenge of engaging execs as prerequisite to success. 3. Challenge of execs returning to “business as usual” versus affecting real change.

**3. Trend:**

- Coaching and follow-up coaching.

**3. Implication:**

- 1. Challenge of finding coaches outside of immediate region of the school. 2. Vetting coaches. 3. Opportunities for technology to support coaching.

**4. Trend:**

- More environmental awareness: Sustainability. Corporate social responsibility.

**4. Implication:**

- 1. Eco-friendly Exec. Ed - Practice what we preach. 2. Is it a “trend” or a topic with legs. 3. Needs to embed across curricula.

**5. Trend:**

- Global market: Global presence/delivery expected. Experience in varied markets expected. Faculty with international experience expected.

**5. Implication:**

- 1. Can easily spread our resources too thin. 2. Challenge of delivering the same caliber off-site. 3. Cost disparity. 4. How to market? 5. Needs links between faculty of partner schools - not just “Deans’ agreement. 6. Faculty reluctance to travel.

**1. Trend:**

- Flexibility, listening well, understand client, know their business.

**1. Implication:**

- Developing these skills and people. Have right people in positions to “take good care” of client.

**2. Trend:**

- Want to see follow-up. Coaching from faculty.

**2. Implication:**

- How can we address with faculty and get them on-board -\$ Build up relationship between faculty and client and our office. Have meetings with faculty to inform of client wants.

**3. Trend:**

- Sophisticated clients. Creative solutions.

**3. Implication:**

- Tailor solutions hitting key points. Stay on toes. High caliber staff, well developed, who can talk and listen at a high level. Staff who are excellent listeners and solution providers.

**4. Trend:**

- Strategic thinking rather than operational process. Short, yet high-impact programs.

**4. Implication:**

- What are you trying to change? Gain their trust to convince them what’s realistic. Become adept at managing expectations. What do you really want to develop and

accomplish through this program?

**5. Trend:**

- Global solutions.

**5. Implication:**

- Listen well. Offer viable solutions. Select right faculty. Consider partnering with other schools in Europe, SA, Asia, etc. to deliver.
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**1. Trend:**

- Increased sophistication of customer demand – especially with respect to relevance and action orientation.

**1. Implication:**

- This is an overarching conclusion. Every school has to become much more skilled in identifying its core differentiator and then clearly articulating this to its targeted segments.

**2. Trend:**

- Need for effective follow-up from learning interventions.

**2. Implication:**

- The same implication as in #4.

**3. Trend:**

- Requirement for a truly global approach.

**3. Implication:**

- Better partnerships. Change of mindset for faculty.

**4. Trend:**

- Demand for multi-disciplinary and multi-modal approach.

**4. Implication:**

- Finding ways to clearly define the value being delivered by each approach and organizing to deliver it in the most appropriate way.

**5. Trend:**

- Increasing blend of providers and products/services.

**5. Implication:**

- Build capabilities for partnership across a more diverse range of organizations. I.e. Not just business schools, but also consultancies, etc.
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**1. Trend:**

- Requests for executive coaching and follow-up programs.

**1. Implication:**

- Impacts on faculty, possibilities on consulting. Scarce resources, how do we bill it – possibly optional groups 1 on 1 partner.

**2. Trend:**

- Want innovation in learning methodology – not case study.

**2. Implication:**

- Need to reskill some. How to find out what makes a difference. Maintenance – how to keep up to date.

**3. Trend:**

- Shrinking market, changing demands.

**3. Implication:**

- Segmenting the market. Schools need to decide what they want to focus on.

**4. Trend:**

- Requests for shorter program.

**4. Implication:**

- Make up of group – geographical focus. How to get level of quality. “Exposure but not real learning” – links into no one??

**5. Trend:**

- Changing needs of businesses – requesting different topics, eg. Ethics, sustainability.

**5. Implication:**

- Need to be one step ahead and know our customers.
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**1. Trend:**

- Partnering with the University – wanting a deeper relationship. Multiple touchpoints.

**1. Implication:****2. Trend:**

- Become more market-driven/customer focused.

**2. Implication:**

- Faculty being more flexible in curriculum development/changes/auditing.

**3. Trend:**

- A unique experience – higher level of customer service and engagement.

**3. Implication:**

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**4. Trend:**

- Non-traditional pedagogical tools – media, simulations.

**4. Implication:**

- Does this fit with traditional executive education competencies?

**5. Trend:**

- Pre-program and post-program need to be more focused and provide participants an opportunity to become grounded in the material prior to class so time in class can be spent digging deeper into the content.

**5. Implication:**

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**1. Trend:**

- Follow-up. ROI issues.

**1. Implication:**

- How do we price it? Resources?

**2. Trend:**

- Purchasing environment in contract signing.

**2. Implication:**

- Cut into our price, administrative requirements on our part.

**3. Trend:**

- Time-frame - shorter development and design.

**3. Implication:**

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**4. Trend:**

- Experiential, action learnings, simulations, non-case study based.

**4. Implication:**

- Develop resources.

**5. Trend:**

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**5. Implication:**

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**1. Trend:**

- Want shorter programs. Both custom and open.

**1. Implication:**

- Modify programs – shorter, fewer number of days. Or modular – x sessions over x months vs. 1 long program.

**2. Trend:**

- Want follow-up, consulting, coaching.

**2. Implication:**

- How to deliver? Issues with pricing, staffing, faculty.

**3. Trend:**

- Want schools to be more flexible – deliver what we want when we want.

**3. Implication:**

- Losing business to consultants and training companies. Schools need to find own niche, pick customers/brand and follow through.

**4. Trend:**

- Want programs delivered off-campus. At company site, at global locations.

**4. Implication:**

- How to price? How to get faculty? Language issues, materials - customizing.

**5. Trend:**

- Want distance learning.

**5. Implication:**

- Losing business to non-university providers. Deliver components virtually/online – tutorials, prep work.

**1. Trend:**

- More flexible solutions - delivery.

**1. Implication:**

- More deliver options - including online, hybrids, locations, more customer focus.

**2. Trend:**

- Globalization.

**2. Implication:**

- More international content, partnerships, delivery locations, networking, social - and cultural - implications.

**3. Trend:**

- Quantifiable results – ROI.

**3. Implication:**

- More real-world learning opportunities, post-program follow-up, coaching.

**4. Trend:**

- Increasing desire for customization.

**4. Implication:**

- Higher cost, restructure business pricing model. Faculty delivery limitations.

**5. Trend:**

- Shrinking market for open enrollment.

**5. Implication:**

- Increased customer service. Schools need to differentiate themselves: more focus. Revise marketing. Strategies - better target CRM and Segment. Less traditional strategies and more online.
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**1. Trend:**

- More informed customers, therefore they can be selective.

**1. Implication:**

- B Schools need to be more proactive in matching programs with customer needs.

**2. Trend:**

- Customers' expectation on deliverables are higher.

**2. Implication:**

- Programs need to be more practical, applied and hands-on with integrated components of the topics from faculty.

**3. Trend:**

- More customers have MBAs/PhDs.

**3. Implication:**

- More programs to develop soft-skills such as conflict resolution.

**4. Trend:**

- The need for true "Global Managers" who are effective. What do they need to become global managers? A result of globalization of companies.

**4. Implication:**

- Programs that teach clients how to become global managers.

**5. Trend:**

- Clients want schools to know more about their company cultures, operations.

**5. Implication:**

- Pay companies a visit.
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**1. Trend:**

- Demographics.

**1. Implication:**

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**2. Trend:**

- Open Programs vs. Custom Programs.

**2. Implication:**

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**3. Trend:**

- Consulting vs. Executive Education.

**3. Implication:**

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**4. Trend:**

- The definition of the market.

**4. Implication:**

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**5. Trend:**

- Middle East, South Africa, Australia, Russia, and Eastern Europe as an alternative to Asian markets.

**5. Implication:**

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**6. The Biggest Problems:**

- Dealing with growth, new topics ie. Programs for hedge funds, investment bankers.
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**1. Trend:**

- Global deliveries. Financial costs – price points. Form partnerships. Resources – people, facilities.

**1. Implication:**

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**2. Trend:**

- Want more from faculty.

**2. Implication:**

- Faculty time. Money. Will it be an open-source faculty model?

**3. Trend:**

- Consultative approach is expected.

**3. Implication:**

- Resources - \$ and staff. Bench strength.

**4. Trend:**

- Practical application.

**4. Implication:**

- Network of industry experts. Financial. Resources.

**5. Trend:**

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**5. Implication:**

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**1. Trend:**

- Change in demographics.

**1. Implication:**

- Need to segment. I.e. programs for: Small to mid-sized businesses. Women. Older executives. MBAs.

**2. Trend:**

- Reputation is important – need to deal with a reputable school.

**2. Implication:**

- Most differentiate as a business school. Must help companies find other reputable sources. Other than business week or Financial Times. I.e. Referrals, alumni base, etc.

**3. Trend:**

- Economic climate is a big driver of Exec. Ed. spending.

**3. Implication:**

- Less investment in Exec. Ed. programs.

**4. Trend:**

- Clients are looking for long-term relationships.

**4. Implication:**

- How do you compensate people? Who is responsible for the relationship management?

**5. Trend:**

- Business school needs to be global – ability to go to the customer internationally.

**5. Implication:**

- How do you serve a client globally? How do you structure yourself? Content needs to be global, not just U.S. focused.
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**1. Trend:**

- Demand higher for programs to show change in performance.

**1. Implication:**

- Allow more time for reflection on how to apply. Design should include how this will be measured.

**2. Trend:**

- Follow-up and ensuring success of the implementation of learning.

**2. Implication:**

- Currently many doing coaching after program with leadership programs and 360°. Plus action learning project completion, but not much more. Challenge? Who can do follow-up. Consultants or faculty?

**3. Trend:**

- Clients “Cherry-pick faculty.”

**3. Implication:**

- Huge pricing differentiators between schools.

**4. Trend:**

- Client wants shorter OEP Programs and are sending less people.

**4. Implication:**

- How do we readjust? Portfolio management. Marketing challenges. Product development →How to launch? How to end?

**5. Trend:**

- Require partnering with other schools.

**5. Implication:**

- Taking a partner takes more time. Smaller margins, can be complex.
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**1. Trend:**

- Focused investment in development.

**1. Implication:**

- More demanding which leads to resource allocation issues. Higher request for instructional design capabilities. Higher expectations from client – want to know exactly what is going to happen and when.

**2. Trend:**

- Shorter time-frames.

**2. Implication:**

- Faculty buy in – is it worth it? Quality. Revenue – have to do a bunch more.

**3. Trend:**

- Faculty misalignment with customer needs.

**3. Implication:**

- Difficult time delivering value proposition. Is faculty misaligned, or is Exec Ed. – how do

faculty interests shape programming?

**4. Trend:**

- Segmentation playing a larger role in the future with baby boomer generation.

**4. Implication:**

- Brand is even more valuable. Who do we market to now? What do we offer?

**5. Trend:**

- Don't lose the theoretical, but layer on the practical.

**5. Implication:**

- No business! Can faculty teach the practical and make the links to the organizational challenges?

**1. Trend:**

- Business schools talk about customer focus but still focus on products - programs.

**1. Implication:**

- Need to listen to customer needs and develop capabilities to meet them.

**2. Trend:**

- U.S. Business Schools are traditional and national, while international schools are innovative, multi-cultural, and global.

**2. Implication:**

- The new ideas about Exec. Ed. may very well come from abroad.

**3. Trend:**

- The current business model – profitable - is built on one teaching many. The new model – uncertain - is demanding one to one interaction - action-learning, post-program follow-up.

**3. Implication:**

- May have to completely redesign and re-scale business model.

**4. Trend:**

- In open enrollment programs, the school controls; in custom the client controls.

**4. Implication:**

- Greater need for flexibility in open enrollment to retain customers.

**5. Trend:**

- Expansion in the number of MBAs.

**5. Implication:**

- Not necessarily negative – MBAs become acolytes of management education and their alumni become brand influencers.

**1. Trend:**

- More sophisticated, want a suite of different delivery methods, professional facilitation, coaching.

**1. Implication:**

- Need to find out more about customers' organizations and business, who their potential powers are, but manage expectations. More fields → More money.

**2. Trend:**

- More demanding customers.

**2. Implication:**

- Standards higher, customers want industry visits, entertainment, linked facilities, lead out limitations. How to do it all?

**3. Trend:**

- Customer wants innovation, even for repeat businesses. Refresh cases, company-specific cases.

**3. Implication:**

- Work on global examples, examples which are relevant, get library to help out and pull out relevant materials.

**4. Trend:**

- Want the new fads, extending the experience multi-disciplinary approach. Prometheus example.

**4. Implication:**

- Need to keep track of new ways of teaching, learning, what competition is doing, etc.

**5. Trend:**

- Globalization and niche programs.

**5. Implication:**

- Need to work with partners, or across different schools to design such new and niche programs.
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**1. Trend:**

- Closer association and collaboration with businesses.

**1. Implication:**

- Establishing focused long-run relationships.

**2. Trend:**

- Improving infrastructure.

**2. Implication:**

- Higher investments.

**3. Trend:**

- Aging faculty.

**3. Implication:**

- Can improve succession plan.

**4. Trend:**

- Offering practical and applicable tools to clients.

**4. Implication:**

- More professionally qualified faculty.

**5. Trend:**

- More and more “partners” and less “clients.”

**5. Implication:**

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**1. Trend:**

- Globalization – and the implication for working across cultures and time zones.

**1. Implication:**

- Understanding client needs, flexibility, in delivery methods/place/pace. Partnering with other – local - schools.

**2. Trend:**

- War on talent.

**2. Implication:**

- Program design, teaching and consulting and coaching. Better Partnering with client.

**3. Trend:**

- Greater customization.

**3. Implication:**

- Staff and faculty development – really listen to clients. Focus on pre and post program.

**4. Trend:**

- Growth strategies. M&A. Alliances. Organic.

**4. Implication:**

- Focus on corporate culture and cross cultural issues. Focus on strategy.

**5. Trend:**

- Aligning HR & Corporate strategy.

**5. Implication:**

- Need to listen/understand client importance of program design. Full service consulting teaching and coaching.