

# Michael W. Lever, Ph.D.

## Teaching Philosophy Statement

My teaching philosophy centers on developing marketing professionals who understand the complexities of consumer behaviour and service-based relationships. Drawing from constructivist learning theory, I create an environment where students become co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information.

In the classroom, I bring marketing concepts to life by leveraging rich service-based examples students encounter daily. Rather than simply defining consumer behaviour concepts, I guide students through exercises that help them discover these principles themselves. For instance, in my Social Media in Hospitality course, I use a "fishbowl discussion" technique where students rotate between active discussion and observation roles, allowing them to critically analyze marketing concepts from multiple perspectives. This approach makes learning more engaging and ensures a deeper understanding of core marketing principles through lived experiences.

My teaching methodology emphasizes three key elements:

1. **Theory-Practice Integration:** I structure assignments to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical applications. For example, as part of my Entrepreneurship course, students develop comprehensive business plans that require applying marketing theories to real-world challenges, from location selection to brand development. This integration helps students understand how marketing principles manifest across various service contexts.
2. **Collaborative Learning:** Drawing from my research expertise in digital engagement and consumer behaviour, I create dynamic learning environments that mirror professional marketing practice. In my Destination Management and Marketing course, I implemented innovative assessment approaches like the "DM Bucks" participation system, which gamifies class engagement while simulating market dynamics. Students learn not just from me but through peer interaction and self-reflection.
3. **Experiential Development:** Marketing education is most effective when students can directly apply concepts. In my courses, students engage with real stakeholders - from conducting field visits to local restaurants to developing social media channels for fictitious

businesses. These experiences help students understand the complexities of marketing decision-making while building practical skills.

Beyond the classroom, I maintain strong connections with industry partners across various sectors, bringing guest speakers to provide diverse perspectives on marketing applications. I encourage students to become keen observers of marketing strategies in their daily lives, celebrating when they share insights about customer journey touchpoints or service blueprint innovations they encounter.

I strive to create an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges and integrates diverse perspectives, particularly recognizing the traditional territories in which we teach and learn. For example, in my Entrepreneurship course, students explore Indigenous approaches to business development when creating their restaurant concepts, including considerations of land acknowledgment, Indigenous employment strategies, and community engagement. In my Social Media in Hospitality course, we examine how digital marketing strategies can amplify diverse voices and create more inclusive brand narratives. This approach aligns with the University of Guelph's commitment to reconciliation through Bi-Naagwad, helping students understand how marketing principles can be applied thoughtfully and respectfully across cultural contexts.

Assessment in my courses is designed to evaluate theoretical understanding and practical application. For instance, in my graduate-level Social Media in Hospitality course, students develop complete campaign strategies, including audience analysis, channel selection, and ROI projections. I provide structured feedback at multiple stages, allowing students to refine their work iteratively, just as they would in a professional marketing environment. The semester culminates in a team-based social media channel which blends course concepts with real-world marketing principles to bring their fictitious businesses to life.

The most rewarding moments come when students independently apply marketing concepts outside the classroom. Recently, a student shared how they used our lessons on service blueprinting to help their family restaurant enhance its delivery operations. These real-world applications demonstrate that students aren't just learning marketing theory – they're becoming marketing professionals who understand how to create value through service experiences.

My approach continues to evolve through regular reflection on student feedback and industry developments. As marketing practices rapidly change with new technologies and consumer

behaviours, I ensure my teaching methods and content remain current and relevant, preparing students to excel in any marketing role, whether in service-based industries or beyond.