



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket, is shown in profile from the chest up, looking out a window. The background is a bright, out-of-focus view of a building exterior. The text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

TRAINING TECHNOLOGY EQUALS SALES SUCCESS

AT HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

The rooms inside Cottrell Hall look like executive suites, complete with modern furniture and the smell of new leather. But for members of HPU's Professional Sales Club, the rooms are their laboratories, places where they practice and begin to dream. Hooked to the wall is a video camera that looks like a big microphone. Sales Club members can record and critique every role-playing negotiation and produce a virtual resume for any potential employer to see. Moreover, the Harris Sales Education Center has become a safe space. Students settle their nerves. They make mistakes, gain confidence, and learn the art and science of selling.

Rising Above the Rest

Larry Quinn, the chair of HPU's marketing department and director of the selling program loves the support the sales labs offer; he helped to create them.

After participating in other collegiate sales competitions, he thought a sales lab could better prepare students for the world of work. Cottrell Hall is a \$22 million, two-story building that feels like a big fishbowl, with its walls of glass and its 43,000 square feet of open space used for classrooms, experiential programs, and the sales labs.

With 4,500 colleges and universities nationwide, Quinn says HPU is one of only a few that offer a comprehensive professional sales degree program. HPU already had the students and the professors. Now, HPU has the tools and the technology to rise above the rest.

Quinn, stepping into a sales lab a few steps from his office, says, "Our students will come in here and stand taller. They'll realize, 'I'm not a kid anymore. I'm walking into an executive office.' They have that sense of 'I can do this.' When that happens, they're bulletproof. They realize they can go anywhere."

Building Skills and Confidence

Selling competitions are part of the experiential learning component for sales majors. A facility that opened this fall allows them to get out-of-the-classroom training directly on campus.

The Sales Education Center opened in Cottrell Hall, home of the Flanagan Center for Student Success, serving as a home for all students—those in sales and those not—to practice their pitches, bringing to life the vision for students to be able to sell themselves and their talents.

The center features three distinct spaces designed to reflect growing industries where students will work. The first space is a financial setting, the second is a technology-based setting similar to Google and Apple, and the third is a health care setting.

In all three spaces, students are recorded making cold calls and conducting mock interviews. The Sales Labs are equipped with Extron StudioStation systems to record the sessions so that students can review and hone their pitching skills. With successive sessions, students correct previous miscues, building confidence and poise. According to Quinn, "Student self-confidence

improves dramatically after the Sales Lab role-play sessions, and it's the AV system that makes it possible."

In each Sales Lab, the camera is wall-mounted next to the remote control panel to capture a wide-angle view of participants. Audio is picked up by a ceiling-mounted microphone, and AV signals are routed to a streaming media processor hidden above the ceiling. The recorded session is stored on the memory stick as MP4 video files compatible with most media players. For competitions and group exercises, the presentations are live-streamed to a judges' room or classroom simultaneous with recording.

"A 20-minute call will be recorded and critiqued on a rubric that's the professional standard," says Quinn. "When we build a portfolio of these videos, recruiters can look through them and find students they think will fit well within their company."

A Solid Future in Sales

The Selling Club competes with other university selling clubs at regional and national intercollegiate meets. Students go head to head in pitching

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products, making cold calls, and, in many ways, selling their own potential.

“These competitions also happen to be ideal job fairs,” says Quinn. “Fifty to sixty major corporations such as IBM or Hewlett-Packard invest major funds to serve as judges at the competitions. That’s because they know these students are the best. They’re better than the people they hired last year from Monster.com. They not only say they can sell, but they prove they can.”

Seniors who attended the most recent competition all received job offers or scheduled interviews at company headquarters. The juniors landed

internships. And Quinn received rave reviews from recruiters about the potential of HPU students. “These companies want to visit HPU and pluck students directly from our campus,” he says. In a world crowded with competition, these students are a commodity in high demand.

Conductors of Confidence

The Phillips School of Business Sales Club uses the labs to prepare for four sales competitions, two career fairs, and the constant two-minute elevator pitch exercises club members work on every year.

Jamison Orr, the club’s co-president, sees the

benefit right away. “It’s the experience itself,” says Orr, a business administration senior from Falmouth, Massachusetts. “When we walk into a beautiful office for an interview, we won’t be mind-blown by the whole situation. It could be our first interview. But it’ll feel like our sixth or seventh. I’m a firm believer that the more you practice, the better you get.” The sales labs are invaluable tools.

But really, it’s the club’s two advisors—Quinn and marketing professor Randy Moser—who help the students shine. Quinn and Moser have ninety years of combined sales and marketing experience, and their teaching style draws students into discussions like moths to an outdoor light.

Moser frequently rolls out advice on life that students call Moser Mantras. Quinn talks about the importance of the Platinum Rule.

The Platinum Rule is treating people how they want to be treated. Jaime Durie, a Sales Club member from Saco, Maine, understands that. At a sales competition in New Jersey, she stood before six tables of judges and got ready for her two-minute elevator pitch. Her jaw started

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to shake, her throat tightened and her stomach turned into a knot.

The words, she worried, wouldn’t come. But right behind her stood Quinn: “You’ve done this 100 times. Pretend it’s me.”

With the first judge, Durie felt her eyes well with tears. By the last judge, she felt awash with confidence. Quinn’s encouragement worked. Practice did, too. Durie graduated with a degree in psychology with a minor in biology. When she did, she already had a job—selling dental supplies and equipment in the Boston area.

“I don’t think I would’ve gotten this job if it wasn’t for High Point,” Durie says. “I know

people my age who have no idea what they want to do. But I figured it out, and that is a good feeling. I wouldn’t be where I am now if I hadn’t walked into Quinn’s office.”

Beyond the Classroom

High Point University’s Professional Selling Club has an annual tradition of delivering Thanksgiving meals to families in the community. Students raise money to buy turkey dinners for families within the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater High Point.

“These meals are coming in at the best time given the coronavirus has left a lot of families without jobs and kids are learning remotely,”

said Kenny Mack, vice president of operations for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater High Point. “This helps the parents figure out what to do about their Thanksgiving. This couldn’t have come at a better time, and our partnership with HPU has been great.”

This year, due to the pandemic, the need is greater than in years past. “I feel so thankful to be a part of this and to have organized this year’s donation,” said Francesca Riehl, vice president of philanthropy for HPU’s Professional Selling Club. “We have a great selling club, and I’m happy that we were able to give back to a community that’s really special to me.”

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Original articles courtesy of *High Point University: HPU Sales Labs Where Students Learn to Sell Their Value* and *Selling Yourself Bringing Business-minded Concepts to Life For All Students* as well as *High Point University Sales Labs Use Studio-Station to Build Student Sales Presentation Skills* from Extron.

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