

IV. Market Researcher (Retail Store)

The Setting

The local print shop had a need to gather and analyze information from customers (commercial and retail) about services provided by the store and suggestions that might be appropriate for implementation. The local store manager asked the high school for a field study team to develop a questionnaire, interview customers, analyze the results, and present findings and recommendations for consideration.

Comparable Settings

Retail stores exist in every community throughout the nation. Retail stores with store managers who have students in the local schools are, perhaps, more willing to involve students in such projects.

The Work

The student team met with the store manager to learn what kinds of products and services were offered by the store and what kind of information the store manager needed to address his customer service and product questions. The team then prepared a letter to the store manager, outlining their understanding of the problem, their approach to the project, what they expected to deliver as a written and oral report, and a timetable for their work. The team then prepared a work plan, a questionnaire, and began the process of interviewing store customers in a private room at the store location. Some of these interviews were with walk-in customers who were willing to spend the time with the students, and some were arranged by the store manager with important commercial and retail customers. The students gathered their data, analyzed it, and prepared a report outlining their findings, conclusions and recommendations. They presented this report orally and in writing to the store manager. As a result of their work, many of the recommendations were adopted and the students received a detailed write-up of their activities in a national newsletter.

The Learning

Students were faced with a real-world business situation with information that needed to be collected from individual customers. Their resource skills were exercised through time constraints inherent in the project, their information skills were tested by the need to identify and then collect the information, their systems skills were exercised through following a disciplined research process to collect and analyze information, their interpersonal skills were practiced through working together as a team and interfacing with customers and the store manager, and their technology skills were practiced through the need to prepare a written report on desktop publishing software.