

V. Market Researcher (Medical Clinic/Hospital)

The Setting

The American Medical Association was interested in participating with a team of suburban and inner city students in a learning-rich program to conduct market surveys for a medical clinic. A team of two inner city students and two suburban students was formed to address the market survey issue. The team was asked to conduct a survey of medical services and non-medical services for a suburban clinic that showed a high degree of interest in working with the local school. The students conducted a 'field study' of customers and reported their findings, conclusions and recommendations to the local clinic and to executives of the American Medical Association in Chicago. Individuals interviewed were limited to parents of children in the local school district in order to ensure the safety of the student team.

This field study is featured in this book. Additionally, this project was featured in the US Department of Labor publication, Teaching the SCANS Competencies.

Comparable Settings

While such a coordinated project involving inner city and suburban youth would be difficult to duplicate across the nation, clinics and hospitals exist nationwide. The study was repeated in Bloomington, Indiana with a local hospital and high school to survey patients of the 'cast room' in the emergency treatment center. *Care was taken -- and always should be taken in such studies - - to ensure that patients interviewed are parents of local school children or are the school children themselves.* While this precaution might make the findings of the survey not completely representative of the marketplace, they are necessary to protect the students.

The Work

The students met with the medical clinic manager and learned about the services (medical and non-medical) provided by the clinic. The manager then furnished the students with a list of individuals (30) who were patients or former patients of the clinic and who were known to be parents of students in the school district. The students then wrote a letter to the manager outlining their understanding of the problem, their approach to the project, what they planned to deliver in terms of a written report, and a timetable for action. The student team then developed a questionnaire, tested the questionnaire with the American Medical Association, contacted individuals on the list, and conducted the interviews. Then they analyzed their data, developed their findings, conclusions and recommendations and presented their report orally and in writing to the local medical clinic staff. Following this, they presented their oral and written report to executives at the American Medical Association in Chicago.

The Learning

This was a comprehensive field study and students were required to use their resource competencies not only through the time constraints of the work, but because two of the students lived in the inner city and two in the suburbs. They used their interpersonal skills extensively through working as a team, interviewing patients, and interacting with medical clinic and American Medical Association executives. Their information skills were tested through the need to gather and interpret information from interviews with patients. Their systems skills were exercised through the need to follow a disciplined process for conducting field studies, and their technology skills were used to prepare and deliver their written and oral reports.