PMBA panel delivers insights on sales and marketing

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Students in Jeff Salyer's Strategic Brand Management class listen to a panel on sales in marketing featuring (from left) Patrick Gahagan, director of sales capability, display and retail operations at Duracell; Michael Morse, CEO of Louisiana Fish Fry; and Jessica Carriere, director of domestic sales at Magic Seasoning.

Jeff Salyer’s Strategic Brand Management class is bringing PMBA students face-to-face with experienced sales and marketing professionals and giving them a look at how these teams operate in real-life business contexts.

As part of the course’s focus on strategic planning, Salyers invited a panel of sales and marketing veterans from the Greater New Orleans region to share business insights and engage with students, many of whom have their own industry

experience. The candid conversation featured Patrick Gahagan, director of sales capability, display and retail operations at Duracell; Michael Morse, CEO of Louisiana Fish Fry; and Jessica Carriere, director of domestic sales at Magic Seasoning.

Using anecdotes from their experiences in sales and marketing, the panelists offered advice about solving team tensions, emphasized the usefulness of cross-functional collaboration and discussed the roll data plays in developing business strategies.

Reflecting on the pain points that can arise between sales and marketing teams, Carriere said sales forces can sometimes focus too much on their sales territory when a broader marketing perspective is needed. “It’s all business,” she said. “The folks in sales have to keep in mind that they’re there to cover the whole business and not just a specific territory.”

To combat these tensions, Gahagan said having a liaison working between the two teams can improve operations. “In a lot of my roles, I was lucky enough to be a liaison between marketing and sales, and it was my job to translate marketing to the sales team folks.”

All the panelists agreed that collaboration is key to a brand’s success.

“To successfully launch a new product as a marketer you have to go through a few stages,” Morse said. “First, you have to convince upper management to launch the product so they can give you the funds. Second, you have to convince the sales force that this is a good idea. Third, you have to sell to the buyer, and it’s the sales force that is in charge of this step. The more that you can get buy in from the sales team, the greater likelihood of success.”

Strategic Brand Management teaches students to analyze customers and markets, position new products and services, and create integrated marketing plans with performance metrics. Through the panel, students in the class saw these concepts come to life. As panel moderator, Salyer noted how theoretical class concepts like diverting, product pricing and trade spend shaped the panelists’ day-to-day marketing and sales work.

The conversation resonated with students, who said they could apply the panelists' advice not only to their coursework but to their own experiences as working professionals.

"I have a background working in sales for the NBA team here in New Orleans, so I got some new insights I can apply to my work," said Giannis Tsahageas (MBA '25). "My experience is mostly in sales, so I never really got a chance to work with a marketing team before. From this panel, I understood that collaboration between the two teams needs to be ongoing."

Crissey Pascale (MBA '25), a medical research specialist at Tulane University School of Medicine, found the panelists' advice on solving real-world problems especially valuable.

"It's important to hear from people who are out there working in the real world," Pascale said. "We're all striving to get jobs, so it's useful to know how real-life teams function. Overall, I thought the panel was great and very insightful."

"The idea of bringing in these professionals from the marketing and sales area is to build on our coursework," Salyers said. "We got to hear from these professionals about what can go right in developing these plans and what can go very wrong."

And that's a lesson that Salyers hopes will benefit students far beyond the classroom.