Best Practices for Teaching Entrepreneurship: What’s transferable from industry?

How did Randy get involved?

He learned from Tom Byers that telling war stories isn’t teaching. “He told me to go talk with some people, and tell me if you’re still interested in teaching.”

Then he talked with Doug MacKenzie, adjunct and active venture capitalist with Kleiner Perkins told him, “Don’t do it, unless you will commit the time to get the satisfaction of teaching. Don’t just add this to your schedule. Only with investment can you make it valuable not only for student but for yourself as well.”

Then he talked with the research professors. Kathy Eisenhardt and Bob Sutton. “What do they expect?” he asked. “This gave me the first taste of intersect of the outside and the university – measures of success on the outside and the in- very different. Sources of respect are different.”

“Then I went to a Price Babson conference session with Jeff Timmons. I learned there is such discipline involved in pedagogical methodology. There’s real art in teaching. I also learned that I felt it was so worthy of the investment of my time and effort. I came away inspired and enthusiastic to do it.”

“Having undergone the gauntlet Tom Byers set before me, Byers gave me a few sections to teach. I fell on my face, came too planned to the class. Wanted to get from A to Z, tried to ask questions and follow up questions to get students to say things he wanted them to say, so he could say what he wanted.”

“Adjuncts are most successful when they have a guide among the full-time faculty. “

“You want to have a team of professor and adjunct or practitioner. I’ve learned how to do this because of my interaction with Tom. Also, it’s a two-way street. The professor learns from the adjunct.”

“Go sit in on experienced teachers. Then take the Harvard course.”

“Team-teaching caused scheduling conflicts. Wanted to spread the teaching capacity.”

“We had a meeting of the adjuncts. One of the adjuncts went in to watch videos to give feedback on the other. It was a very powerful technique.”
“3/4 of teaching awards are won by adjuncts. This pissed off the full-time faculty. Adjuncts are sensitive topics with most departments. They may be respected, but are second-class citizens. Better not expect to become the best professor in the department, because you don’t have the experience, you’re starting over. The journey better be the reward. We are comrades, but there is a clear divide. There’s shorter tenures at places where people feel very excluded.”

“Byers had the funds to avoid the dept-style way of treating adjuncts. Jim Collins is the poster child of adjunct / department divorce. If adjuncts care about their status within the department, they will be dissatisfied. They need to come in with their own sense of self-worth, strong ego, and want students, and the respect of their colleagues. Senior entrepreneurs are getting paid a fraction of what their inexperienced fresh PhDs are being paid. They’re used to being paid on the basis of merit; if they appreciated you, they’d pay you more. Emphasize the non-monetary rewards.”

“Adjuncts need to go around and build the relationships within the department. Will find advisors and supporters on the staff, which can be critical. If there is a conflict, can be microcosm of larger conflict. Motivations of both sides need to be taken into account. Large sense is that you’re making a sacrifice, and giving back.”

“I had an office and a business card in the outside world. I was taking on a new identity. What facilitates it, is really critical. Make sure the adjuncts have business cards. That’s the one I carry. Another important one: be in contact with the students, their bright young minds. In the bleak years, contact with them was critical. This wasn’t the worst of times for them, this was the only time, they had to go get a job. There’s lots of psychic currency in this job. You need the right match so that the psychic rewards that people value are there. And you need to feed them.”

**Difference between now and then**

During the first year, Komisar offered a few sessions. The next year, he took half of the sessions. The year after, Byers suggested one class, one class. Komisar didn’t want to deal with bureaucracy. He saw that it was complicated. He didn’t think he was ready. It was a great safety net working with Tom. Tom is very organized.

“We divided it thematically. Every two weeks they swap. We overlap only four periods out of twenty.”

Komisar describes it as “a healthy deep dive into a particular relationship. But the bigger picture is that it is a part of a runaway train. We don’t have a lot of people to teach entrepreneurship.”

**Divide between Tenure track faculty and Adjunct faculty**
“Tenure line faculty, research; they can’t teach. Adjunct teach, but don’t research.”

Doug MacKenzie, an entrepreneurial finance adjunct, doesn’t want to team teach. He says, “I’m a solo player. He’s Sting, not U2, would never play in a band.”

“Kathy Eisenhardt is a great scholar of strategy, but a gifted teacher as well.”

“Lecture-based teaching style, diminishes the value of adjuncts. Many tenure-track professors more comfortable with this.”

“In case-based courses, adjuncts are very significant. They’re very improvisational. Entrepreneurs are much more comfortable with this. It’s a much less structured environment. They’re different every semester, because it’s different with each new social setting.”

Having adjuncts can help a school ranking depending on the rating system.

Preparation

“You’ve got to prepare a lot. I got the impression that it would take 20 hours a week for teaching two sessions and having office hours. Price Babson scared the bejesus out of me. In third year, I’m spending maybe 15-18 per week during the quarter and have a teaching team of TA’s, CA’s, who are doing the evaluation. The logistics of the class I give over to Tom.”

The is part of the STVP culture, a center within the MS&E department. We may be a research center. But also do a lot of teaching. We do research, but also a teaching center as well. A new concept is to have a center with a focus on teaching.

Price Babson

“We need more places to learn teaching. We need more workshops. The Price Babson Institute brings together a professor and entrepreneur who want to teach, brings them together as a team for a 3-4 day period once a year in June. It’s a very robust and inspiring program. There’s an annual alumni program. It’s a time to reflect, to come back and share and reintegrate.”

Harvard

“Harvard has a case teaching program twice a year. They also have a 2-CD interactive multimedia course.”

Syracuse

Lifelong Learning Program: An experiential classroom every September in Syracuse.
“These programs aren’t cheap. They need to get master teachers for several days.”

“There are academy pre-conference workshops. PDW. These are free after the trip fees.”

“Asee is trying to get a teaching session.”

“Price Babson made me aware of what it be to be a great teacher. Doesn’t make you become a great teacher. But the awareness is critical, it got and channeled my attention. I got the impression that this is both hard and important. It really helped establish my expectations.”

“They [entrepreneurs] come and go. [They’re interested in ] new things. Entrepreneurs are good at starting, but maybe not at staying. They’re going to leave. 2-3 years is a lifetime for these guys.”

The Making of a Good Teacher

“What makes a teacher a good teacher? How long they had been teaching.”

“When I see the students light up, when I see the information going in, when you’re able to turn somebody on, standing on the shoulders of shoulders of giants. There’s nothing better than that feeling.”

Not doing this to the exclusion of everything else. Do this for 1/4 of the year. I do have a mix and a balance. It is great for me to have this flexibility, which Tom has designed in for me. Having this is part of what’s going to keep me in on the longer term. If there’s no variance possible, I might walk away from a rigid structure.”

What about planning? I need to have a bench.

“Adjuncts also get the benefit of boning up on interesting new ideas and literature.”

Through teaching, I’ve been made a better listener; making the ideas flow and facilitating a group of people, getting to a better answer in real time. I bring this ability out of the classroom.”

“As an entrepreneur, there’s a sense of bulling your way to whatever the goal is, that meeting or that quarter.”

“Really good teachers are good at asking questions and then at listening. That applies equally well in business…at least in sales and marketing.”

“Questions are more important than the answers. Without the right questions, you will never get to the right answer. In Silicon Valley, where things are shifting all the time, it is the questions that stay the same. If you can identify and refine these, you can learn so much more.”
“The quality of my role fundamentally has improved. First company successful in spite of myself. Now I know so much.”

Considerations of Adjunct Faculty

1. How do you bring them in and get them acquainted
2. What are the needs of adjuncts?
   a. Communication
   b. Respect
   c. Need to provide investment and commitment
3. What are the qualifications and experience of the adjunct?

“There’s a power of partnering the adjuncts with the full-time mainstream faculty.”

“If you knew what you know now when you started, you wouldn’t have done it. Keep my feet on the ground and head in the clouds. I’m really talking about life, change, and transformation. It’s the most hopeful discipline to be taught. It’s really important. Kids at the end of the class say. “I thought I was going to learn about business but I learned about life. Entrepreneurship so loaded with issues of globalization and challenges. We can help them prepare to rise to the occasion and see these problems as opportunities and solve them. There can’t be something more valuable to teach.”

“We’re at the tip of a tsunami. People want it without knowing why.”