Lesson Plan for Chapter 3
Instant: The Story of Polaroid by Christopher Bonanos
First Year Book 2014-15

Prior to Class:
Have students read Chapter 3 of Instant in preparation for this class activity and discussion. The chapter guide online (fyb.umd.edu) will also help them prepare for the class.

Chapter 3: Seeing It Now

‘Seeing It Now’ begins with the truly historic moment when Edwin Land stood on stage and revealed instant photography to a stunned audience of scientists and journalists at the annual meeting of the Optical Society of America. Within a day, the world was amazed as well, as the news spread through the media. Edwin Land not only had a brilliant new product, but knew how to sell it. Now that the world wanted an instant camera, Polaroid set out to create one for the consumer market. In 1948, the Model 95 hit shelves and sold out its first day. They had to overcome a few obstacles during the first year of instant photography, but they continued to innovate and created a product that everyone had to have.

Edwin Land also knew the importance of collaboration, and began one of the most important collaborations of Polaroid: with the famous photographer Ansel Adams. Adams stayed on as a consultant to Polaroid for the rest of his career, testing the cameras and offering feedback. Quality was of utmost importance to Land, and working with one of the world’s best photographers allowed them to constantly develop their product until it was a good as possible.

Class Activity: Revealing your Product to the World

(If the class has done the Class Activity for Chapter 2, they can use the same product idea.)

In small groups, have students come up with a creative product idea and a company around it. They should come up with a story for the company and the product – how did the company start, how did they come up with their product, and why does the world need it?

1. Come up with a company name and logo. What’s the story behind the company? Who started it and why? What makes this company unique?
2. Come up with your main product. Create a creative or innovative product that the company markets. What is it and what does it do? What was the idea or stimuli behind its creation? Why should people buy this product? How much does it cost? Why?

3. Develop a creative way to pitch this product to the world, much like Edwin Land did with his first Polaroid demonstration. Be able to tell a short but engaging story for your product. How and where will you present it for the first time? Who will your audience be? How will you get your message out to the widest audience possible?

4. Imagine you can bring in one expert to consult for your company. Who would it be?

Have each team ‘reveal’ their product to the class.

Discussion

1. Were there any presentations that were particularly successful? Why?

2. Why is it important to be able to communicate the importance of your product or idea to an audience?

3. Would you have presented it differently in a different context (i.e. outside of the classroom)? How would this affect the way you planned to reveal your product?

4. Why did each group choose the consultant that they chose? Have them explain their reasoning and discuss as a class.

5. Talk about how this exercise might affect the way you approach your four years at UMD. Can you use these skills to be able to communicate your goals and your vision? What is your story? what are you creating during your time here? Why is it important to be able to tell others about your story? How else can you apply what you’ve learned in this exercise and chapter to your four years at UMD?