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Hands-On Advantage: To help boost their business, corporations are turning to people who tote backpacks instead of briefcases - By Jenna Schnuer

The midday watering wasn't cutting it. Continued interruptions to answer customer questions about the greenery for sale at Fort Worth, Texas-based Calloway's Nursery made it impossible for employees to whisk through the watering process without interruption, and the business was clearly suffering for it.

"The largest single dollar amount of hourly labor we spend is related to the watering of the plants," says Jim Estill, Calloway's president. When several of the company's 18 retail garden centers in the Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston areas tried to replace hand watering with overhead sprinklers, a new problem arose — the process left a chalky residue on the plants. "If you were a customer in a nursery and you saw a lot of chalky stuff on the leaves, it's not nearly as pretty as a bright, shiny leaf," Estill notes. And the sprinklers, which used far more water than hand watering, sent the stores' H₂O bill soaring. Costs went up, and sales took a hit.

Frustrated, Estill took his problem to **Neeley & Associates Consulting**, a program launched in 2006 by **Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business** to put MBA students to work solving real-world business issues for clients. Some business owners may consider it a gamble to look to students for answers, but **Neely & Associates** promised results, and Estill was not disappointed. He says the six students assigned to the Calloway project went far beyond what many professional consultants would do.

"They didn't just want to sit in the nice cool office and run a bunch of statistics," Estill says. "They spent more of their time in the stores and got to know the employees and the way they worked. They weren't just telling us how it ought to be. They were telling us how it was and how we could address it."

Calloway's is not the only company to turn to a school for business solutions. Colleges all over the country have developed consulting programs designed to match businesses with student brainpower. The programs are springing up in engineering schools, business schools, and beyond. Some schools offer their programs' services to businesses free (aside from any project-related expenses), while others charge a fee. Students are able to get invaluable real-world experience. And for the colleges, says **Ed Riefenstahl, Neeley's director of experiential learning**, there's an added benefit: the consulting arm gives the school an edge in attracting top student talent. *Read the full story here:* <http://magazine.continental.com/200811-idea-of-the-moment>

Fort Worth Business Press

November 3, 2008

Iraq business ventures worth the risk, ambassador says - By Leslie Wimmer

For business owners in any industry considering globalization, risk will be rewarded in helping to rebuild Iraq, said Iraqi Ambassador to the United States Samir Shakir M. Sumaida'ie, during a visit to Fort Worth, Oct. 22-24.

While businesses in various industries from countries across the Middle East, Asia and Europe are moving into Iraq rapidly, American business owners will have more concerns about security because of the politics surrounding the war, said **Garry Bruton, academic director of the Neeley Entrepreneurship Program at Texas Christian University**. "There are a lot of other nationalities that are active in Iraq right now, but they clearly have less political issues associated with their presence than we have with our presence, so safety would be a huge concern," **Bruton said**. "The return has to be very, very high to offset the startup costs, which are going to be high. Getting a product there, local turmoil, the returns need to be commensurate."

TCU
DAILY SKIFF

October 31, 2008

Princeton Review features Neeley among top business schools - *By Krystal Upshaw*

Business students can count on a top notch education at the Neeley School of Business, according to The Princeton Review.

The Princeton Review ranked the Neeley School of Business as one of the top business schools in the nation in the 2009 edition guidebook released in October. The 2009 guidebook features 296 of the nation's top business schools.

Neeley has always done well with the Princeton Review, said **Bill Moncrief, senior associate dean at Neeley**. "We're pleased the rankings are recognizing us," he said, "especially the ones looking at programs instead of people's perception."

Fort Worth
Business Press

November 13, 2008

TCU, Business Press team up for Fort Worth economic summit - *By Aleshia Howe*

As the nation's economic situation continues to evolve, TCU's **Neeley School of Business and the Luther King Capital Management Center** have teamed up with *The Fort Worth Business Press* to present a financial forum for the local business community featuring leaders in financial, real estate, oil and gas and risk management industries.

O. Homer Erikson, John V. Roach Dean of the Neeley School of Business, will give the general session speech, discussing local economic issues in light of national economy trends. "We need to establish re-confidence in the financial and economic markets and determine what will be the feedback affects on the real markets, such as consumer market, credit market," he said. "And the business community needs to take a step back and differentiate the short term from the long-term perspectives."...

Erikson called the local market a good one, but said further market strains are sure to come. "We're in a relatively good situation and good market. That doesn't mean a great situation, but a good one. There is strength in our regional financial sector and as the economy recovers, we'll see that strength as a saving grace," he said. "But there are still questions in the region as to what are the implications for nationwide consumer spending, which is going to be down. And though we haven't had the severe housing problems here, how will the nation's housing problems begin to affect us."

Erikson said the fundamental question for the local region is "are we doing the right things now to provide more stability as we go forward in an emerging economy?"...

"I just spoke to one of our local CEOs today who told me, 'If I just had one day without news, good or bad, then that would be great.' That's an example of what's going on in the minds of leaders today," **Erikson said**. ...

Erikson said he hopes business leaders leave the session with more of a "big picture" mind-set. "I want for them to leave with a greater awareness of the inner dependency of the different industries that are affected here," he said. "Hopefully, there will be some important learning, but also a greater appreciation for the short-term risks in our current situation for us regionally but doing so with long-term perspective."

Star-Telegram

November 16, 2008

Texas shoppers could keep holidays here brighter than most for retailers - *By Andrea Ahles*

North Texas retailers are hanging their stockings with care in hopes that consumers soon will be there. With less than 40 days until Christmas, economists predict that local stores will have better holiday sales seasons than their counterparts in the rest of the nation. But that's not necessarily good news.

"Retailers are going to try to do everything they can to stimulate sales, given the bad economy," said **Julie Baker, a marketing professor at Texas Christian University**.

Consumers are cautious about how they are spending their money, and retailers that are seen as "value" or "discount" stores, such as Wal-Mart and Costco, are more likely to do well.

"All stores now are focusing on this value equation: Pay less here, get a better value," **Baker** said. As a result, there will be good buys out there for consumers who have the cash and are willing to spend it

Fort Worth Business Press

November 18, 2008

Financial Forum: Opportunities still available in real estate - *By Aleshia Howe*

Several real estate professionals were on hand as TCU's **Neeley School of Business and the Luther King Capital Management Center** teamed up with the *Business Press* to present a financial forum for the local business community featuring leaders in financial, real estate, oil and gas and risk management industries. The forum, held at the TCU campus on Nov. 18, focused on preparing for surviving the economic and credit challenges facing the business community.

Financial Forum: Risk management comes to fore during tough economy - *By Elizabeth Barrett*

Finding appropriate insurance—if it's needed—was the focus of the risk management breakout session at the Fort Worth Business Press/TCU financial forum on Nov. 18.

"Sometimes insurance doesn't make sense," said **Pete Locke, a professor of finance at the Neeley School of Business at TCU**. For example, insuring a home on the Gulf Coast may not make any sense because the home could be wiped away by a hurricane, and any insurance policy would be either very expensive to afford or would have so many limitations that it would be useless.

New regulations on tap for financial markets - *By Leslie Wimmer*

"The financial environment perhaps has not kept pace with the rapid innovations in the industry, much like an aging race track cannot handle the high speed of newer, ever more powerful race cars," said **Larry Lockwood, finance professor at Texas Christian University**. "I think policymakers don't necessarily want to impede the power of innovative investments, but rather to improve the environment in which they operate. I would imagine much of the attention will focus on improving transparency and disclosure, so we all can better understand and more completely monitor the potential risks being undertaken."

TCU DAILY SKIFF

November 20, 2008

Obama's marketing strategies might present lessons for businesses - *By Michael Carroll*

President-elect Barack Obama's campaign that focused on change was so successful that it may soon lead to a change in the way businesses of all types go about marketing themselves, **a professor in the Neeley School of Business said**.

Stacy Landreth Grau, an associate professor of professional practice in marketing, said the Obama campaign's ability to reach out to voters, especially young disenfranchised voters, was a stroke of marketing genius. "He was the first one that used social networking and used it in a very smart way. Honestly, in such a smart way that corporations and nonprofits need to look at Barack Obama to figure out how the heck they could use that for their own purposes."

Grau said it was more than just good marketing that got Obama elected. "I don't want to say that marketing and advertising were the only things that led to his victory, because obviously he has a lot of substance. However, when you look at the way he put together that campaign it's pretty amazing."

Grau said anyone who is marketing something must find a competitive advantage. Finding a message that resonates with the consumer - the voter in this case - is important, she said. Obama did that with his message of change. "In almost two years he never deviated from that message."

Grau said Obama's meteoric rise to the presidency was unlikely for a number of reasons. "Two years ago here's this guy who is completely unknown to anyone outside of Illinois with the exception of the fact that he made a great speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004," she said.

Not only was he relatively unknown, he was a black man with a name that a lot of people found to be unsettling, **Grau** said. Obama then went up against and defeated two of the world's most well-known and well-connected politicians in Sen. Hillary Clinton and McCain. Clinton and McCain's campaigns focused on each candidate's experience, but in each case it was no match for Obama's unwavering message of change, **Grau** said.

"If you look at John McCain's campaign and if you looked at Hillary Clinton's campaign, it's very similar in that they sort of never found a message that they could get some traction with," **Grau** said. "Barack Obama stayed with change."

Dallas Business Journal

November 21, 2008

SMU adds program for executive women - *By Joyce Tsai*

William Cron, associate dean of the graduate program at Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business, said that TCU recently revamped its executive MBA program to emphasize leadership skills, on an individual basis, such as the ability to communicate, persuade and lead. It also hired professional development coaches for its students.

"There is no doubt that there is a need for (leadership) training," **Cron** said. "It's probably never been more important in terms of a company perspective." And for both men and women, the SMU course's focus on coaching physical and boardroom presence can have a huge impact, he said. "You cannot overestimate how important that is to people's judgment in that short of a time," he said.

Dallas Business Journal

November 28, 2008

Back to class: North Texas MBA classes swell as would-be executives weather changing economy, job market - *By Joyce Tsai*



LECTURE TIME: **Vassil Mihov**, associate professor of finance at Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business, teaches a morning class.

With Texas' unemployment rate up by nearly a third in the past year, leading Wall Street indicators down by 40% or more since Jan. 1 and financing woes still wreaking havoc for many companies, an in-cresing number of would-be executives are heading back to school to ride out the current economic storm from the relative comfort of area universities' MBA programs.

Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business has seen a 40% increase in applications, said **Peggy Conway**, its director of MBA admissions.

Conway said in the current economic climate more individuals will be rethinking their career direction or seeking new opportunities because they've lost their jobs or are underemployed, a trend that is being mirrored by MBA programs across the country.

Star-Telegram

November 30, 2008

Not everyone is a loser in today's struggling economy - *By Barry Shlachter*

... aggressively priced e-merchants, who have had their dramatic ups and downs, might be counted among the blessed this season.

"Anything [based] on online," suggested **Bill Moncrief**, the senior associate dean at Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business and the **Charles F. and Alann P. Bedford Professor of International Business**. Prices online can be more competitive because of lower overhead while people can easily compare them without having to leave the house and spend money on gasoline, **Moncrief** said.

"Other winners will be anyone who can provide refurbished durables, anything from electronics to used appliances," he said. **Moncrief** sees people seeking cheaper substitutes in various categories, taking the bus or train instead of flying, getting a supermarket-prepared meal or a **Stouffer's** frozen entree instead of dining out, and attending Fort Worth Cats or TCU Horned Frog baseball games next year instead of the Texas Rangers. "And while Six Flags may lose those kids who go several times a year, it might gain families seeing it as a substitute for a trip to Florida," the TCU professor added.