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## **Chapter X**

# **Media Entrepreneurship as an Online Course: A Case Study**

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## **Abstract**

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*This chapter describes the conversion of a traditional classroom course to one taught online. Creating a Media Business has been part of the Business curriculum within a broad, traditional Mass Communications major, and its objective has been to introduce students to the theory and practice of starting an independent media enterprise. The attempt to transform any traditional academic course into a virtual one will invariably entail redefining pedagogical issues such as requirements, assignments, participation, and evaluation. Certain course content and objectives are more amenable to both the opportunities and constraints posed by the Internet. Our course was enhanced by the conversion because of its suitability for transfer from the tangible to the virtual environment. More specifically, for Creating a Media Business, the Internet is not merely a channel of information transmission, but very often an important, if not essential, part of the very business about which the students are learning.*

## Background

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In the early 1990s, Temple University's Broadcasting, Telecommunications, and Mass Media Department instituted a new course, *Creating a Media Business*, to introduce students to the knowledge and skills fundamental to building their own media enterprise. This undergraduate course, with a graduate-student component, was created to broaden students' professional vistas by exploring work possibilities outside the domain of established media agencies. Typically, students planning careers in the media often focus on securing positions in the extant TV networks, radio stations, telecommunications corporations, recording companies, advertising and public relations firms, and so forth. Of course, since the media have powerful and glamorous associations for many people, the job market with respect to these agencies is competitive, even in the best of economic circumstance, and even those newcomers fortunate enough to be hired must often begin their careers in positions somewhat different in kind (i.e., not just in level) from that to which they aspire. *Creating a Media Business*, then, was designed to allow students to explore opportunities outside the traditional business or corporate model, thereby enhancing not only the number, but also the range of professional possibilities on which they might plan. These possibilities might apply to career decisions before or immediately after graduation or to career changes following a more traditional stint in the media/corporate world. At any stage, the kind of entrepreneurial skills to which students would be introduced in this course are those which enable individual dreams to be realized.

Clearly, by the turn of the twenty-first century, many, if not most, teaching institutions began incorporating online/computer technology into the educational experience. William H. Graves (2000) defined virtual learning spaces as those not constricted by time or place. Institutions began to explore new teaching opportunities that required reorganization of content because the instructor was no longer the primary vehicle for dissemination of knowledge. The new e-learning environment in which students were able to learn through software applications as opposed to learning through a textbook became synonymous with some online teaching (Graves, 2000). Thus, the move to offer courses online and/or through distance-learning was initiated, if only in the name of routine progressiveness. However, from a rather robust roster of traditionally taught mass communication offerings, *Creating a Media Business* (after having been taught traditionally for three years) was one of only a handful of courses in the major designated for online conversion. This decision to move it into the virtual classroom was motivated by more than routine progressiveness.

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