



Flipping, Podcasting, and Friendly Competition

How Mike Garver made his Marketing Research class inspiring for students while preparing them for their careers

At A Glance

- Mike Garver realized that his courses were not promoting the highest level of learning possible. So, he decided to flip his classroom.
- Using Camtasia for Mac, Mike now records short podcasts for his students to watch where they want, whenever they want, allowing them to come to class ready to take a critical look at what they're learning.
- Mike's students are engaged and performing in the class better than ever before, with 35 percent of students now receiving top grades on Mike's toughest exam.

Mike Garver is a professor at Central Michigan University. He's not particularly tech-savvy and is a lifelong devotee to the teaching profession. He never set out to start a revolution or be a leading voice in the fundamental shift of classroom dynamics. Nevertheless, Mike Garver is making a huge difference in his students' college careers and the education community with his knowledge, charisma and a little help from Camtasia for Mac.

The Problem

When Mike started his teaching career, he was on fire. His blend of charisma, humor and knowledge made classes engaging and fun. Students wanted to be there, they wanted to participate and take part in Mike's discussions. But Mike found out that he wasn't having the impact he had hoped to have.

"Three weeks into my first teaching job, a member from the faculty development center came by to watch one of my lectures," said Mike. "I could not have asked for a better class. The lecture went great and I had a great conversation with the students. I thought I was going to blow the faculty development guy away. And I did. Kind of."

Mike was told that, while he had done a great job in the class, his lesson wasn't pushing students to higher levels of learning. The faculty development team member introduced Mike to the concept of Bloom's Taxonomy, or the levels of learning that can take place during a lesson.

Leading up to that point, Mike had mainly lectured to students. This approach asked students to memorize facts and gain basic knowledge about the subject at hand, which is on the lower end of Bloom's learning objectives. However, Mike wanted to be on the higher end—that is, the end at which students were doing what they had learned and critiquing their work themselves.

"That conversation really opened my eyes," said Mike. "I realized that teaching is not just about lecturing, that it's not just passing knowledge like we have been doing for so long. At the college level, it's not just enough to understand the concepts. Students have to be able to do and analyze what they're learning to be valuable to future employers."

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I think of it in terms of baseball. I can't tell my players how to hit a ball and then expect them to perform at a high level during a game. They need to do the work themselves to fully understand what they're doing and how to do it."

—Mike Garver,
CMU Professor

Central Michigan University

- CMU first opened as Central Michigan Normal School and Business Institute in 1892.
- Located in Mount Pleasant, Mich., CMU welcomes nearly 30,000 students to their campus each fall.
- CMU offers more than 200 programs at the undergraduate, masters, specialist and doctoral levels.

The Solution

Mike needed to figure out how to give students the content and have them actually do what they were learning about.

"I think of it in terms of baseball," said Mike. "I can't tell my players how to hit a ball and then expect them perform at a high level during a game. They need to practice. They need to do the drills. They need to do the work themselves to fully understand what they're doing and how to do it."

So Mike decided to make his course content available to all of his students where ever and whenever they needed it.

Mike started creating podcasts out of his lectures, recording his voice and presentation slides in videos. As he learned more about what students wanted most from lectures, he began refining his process and turning to tools like Camtasia for Mac to make the job easier.

In the classroom, Mike freed up more time for class discussion and critical thinking. His students were given access to all the information they needed to know before each class. This allowed students to come to class prepared to practice what they had learned and critique the work they were doing.

Mike also injected a spirit of friendly competition into his classes. Just as his students would find in their jobs outside of college, he had them work in small teams throughout the semester. In each class, Mike quizzes all of the teams on what they've learned from his podcasts. These teams also work together throughout the semester on assignments and the final class project.

The Results

Mike's classes are considered student favorites on campus. But beyond the excitement students get out of his class, his students are walking away with practical skills they have practiced and used in situations that mimic what they will encounter at their future jobs.

"Every semester, I have students do marketing research or strategy for a real client as a final project," said Mike. "Prior to flipping my classroom, students just didn't get it and fell flat at presentation time. Now, students are knocking it out of the park. So much so that a client one semester told me 75 percent of my students presented material better than the consultant he had hired for \$30,000 the month before."

Mike also makes a special point to inspire his students to join him on his flipped classroom journey. He notes that his class would not be possible if he didn't get students on board with a new approach to their learning. And just as he knew something needed to change in his approach to lecturing, students too recognize the need for something to change in their approach to learning.

"I keep the door for feedback wide open for my students," said Mike. "By asking for their feedback, I've figured out how many videos to make for each lesson, how long the videos should be and revised my teaching style—all by listening to what students want out of their education."

Mike's first podcasts were long, with some podcasts more than an hour in length. But by asking his students what they wanted most out of his videos, he learned to split lessons up into bite-size chunks (anywhere from 3 – 15 minutes) so that students can find important information about a topic faster and easier.

Also of note, Mike has noticed a huge increase in the number of students earning top marks on his (admittedly) toughest test.

“One of my exams is brutal by design,” said Mike. “The test pushes students to the limit of their knowledge. Prior to flipping, I had five percent of students earning four-points. After flipping, 35 percent of my students receive four-points on the exam.”

Continuing the Change

For educators looking to flip their classroom, Mike says it is important to walk before you run. Flipping the classroom gets a little bit easier with the help of products like Camtasia, but it can't happen overnight. Teachers have to learn to become classroom facilitators instead of lecturers.

Mike notes that flipping is an ongoing, ever-changing experience. He is constantly looking for feedback from students and even hosts small gatherings with students after courses end to learn how he can better the course experience for the next group of students he teaches.

Mike is also very quick to point out that he's not the most tech-savvy guy—and that doesn't matter.

“Flipping is not about the technology,” said Mike. “Technology facilitates flipping your class, but the technology isn't what matters. Flipping is about taking your students to that next level where they can see that they're learning, that they're doing what they're learning and they can critique their knowledge and skills to use in their life after the class ends.”

According to Mike, students need to know that their input is actually making a difference too. Mike hears back from 92 percent of his students when he asks for feedback. And then he actually implements their suggestions.

Finally, Mike gives his students the opportunity to “go big.” He lays out his expectations, but then allows students to find new methods to present the information they have learned. They might still turn in PowerPoint presentations, but many of Mike's students have begun using Camtasia to create videos for the projects he assigns.

While the shift from classroom lecturer to classroom facilitator can be a difficult jump, Mike notes that it's important to walk before you run, practice the concepts you want to use in your class and bring your students along for the ride. But when all goes according to plan, Mike gets to experience what he calls “wow” days—days when students are so engaged, he can't get a word in edgewise.