

Gary Beemer  
Lecturer 1 Marketing

In high school my guidance counselor asked me what I wanted to do with my life. When I said teach and write he recommended business instead – specifically marketing. His rationale was that I could make a good living by educating customers using persuasive writing. I took his advice.

I started and operated my own business as a young entrepreneur, and after selling the business went to work in Sales and Marketing Management for one of the largest private companies in the world. This company is a US based manufacturer and has several domestic factories. My father had left farming to work in one of these factories, and I remember him discussing at our family dinner table how union organizers were trying to unionize the company's factories. They were unsuccessful, because employees – who were called Associates – were treated with respect, compensated fairly, and did not have an adversarial relationship with management. Today, the company is still highly successful after 100 years in business, and continues to build and operate factories in the United States – and all are non-union.

After a successful career in business, my ambition again turned to teaching. I had no formal instructional experience other than corporate training roles, but had significant business knowledge and experience, and the proper academic credentials to teach at the college level.

I applied to teach Marketing at UT and was offered an adjunct position teaching one Principles class. This afforded UT the opportunity to give me a trial run while evaluating me, and an opportunity for me to evaluate my level of interest in continuing to teach. One course turned into two, and then a full-time one semester opportunity became available. I loved teaching full-time, and let my department chair know that I was interested in teaching full-time as an Instructional Practitioner. No opportunity existed at the time, but one did become available later, and I was able to earn a renewable Lecturer 1 position which I currently hold.

As a former adjunct and now full-time lecturer, I have always been treated with great respect and deference by UT faculty, administrators and students; and believe that UT has a unique culture that is focused on teaching excellence and experiential learning. Though UT is now a mid-sized university, it retains its small university feel in the classroom and in the interactions between students, faculty, administrators and staff. This collegial environment where faculty talk directly to department chairs, deans and other administrators, offers a degree of flexibility and openness that would not be afforded with a union placed squarely between them.

In fact, it is my personal opinion that a union at UT may have prevented me from pursuing a life-long dream of teaching, while depriving UT of a mechanism to choose the optimal combination of tenured, term and adjunct faculty to meet the needs of students. There are many highly skilled practitioners who do not want to leave their “day” jobs, but are often interested in bringing their significant industry experience as adjuncts to students who are eager to connect theory with application. There are also practitioners like me who would prefer

to teach full-time as Instructional and/or Scholarly Practitioners without having to be tenure track.

In a very real way, UT is similar to the private company I worked at for nearly 25 years, where Associates were treated with respect, compensated fairly, and had good relationships with management – sans unions.

I support merit-based opportunity without undue restrictions and conditions, and believe that direct contact between instructional, supervisory and administration - with no intermediary to increase costs and reduce flexibility – is the best way to achieve this.

I'd also like to thank the Drs. Vaughn and Stern for providing detailed information on unionization, and clearly outlining the facts so that an educated decision could be made by faculty.

Sincerely,

Gary Beemer