

Motivation Maps

Hailing back to one of the earlier (2009) articles in *Sunday with Sensei's Journal*, I have found that people enter the martial arts for many reasons, the dominant among being: Self-defense, Sport, Exercise, and an Interest in Asian Philosophy or Culture. Each martial arts school emphasizes at least one of these and most emphasize somewhat of a balance. In those earlier articles, I suggested that prospective students seek out a school that fits their personal needs by asking the correct questions of the head instructor and, when possible, the students.

I still support that advice for prospective students; however, this time around, I would like to address the head instructor with a novel approach to accepting students, based on the same paradigm. Schools are usually eager to enroll any applicant who has sought them out. Some instructors encourage a prospect to visit the other schools in the area so that she is comfortable with her choice, while most pull out a contract or fit the prospect for a *gi* as soon as possible. Students are often not easy to come by so why scare them away with more precise information about what the school teaches and how it merges with what the student is seeking? They will, after a while, feel comfortable with the school and, not knowing any other school as well, will see its positive characteristics as reasons enough for staying enrolled. After all, even if they drop out after 3 months, that's 3 months of tuition the school has pocketed.

Why don't universities do it this way? Why do they have an admission process? Why do universities care if the student fits? After all, if she drops out after 3 months, that's a year of tuition the university has pocketed. Well, some universities have been known to overbook their freshman class, knowing that 30% will drop out and knowing that no refunds will be released. However, most want to keep up the reputation of the university in terms of academic quality or job placement ratio. The best way to do that is to make sure that they do not have a huge dropout rate and that the student has a reasonable chance to succeed in her studies.

Businesses hire people based on their qualifications and how they fit in the work environment. We can easily understand why. What business would be foolish enough to hire someone who wants to be there, to whom they will pay a salary, but either can't do the job or is an irritant to a comfortable corporate culture?

Even if a martial arts school cannot afford to turn away prospects, I suggest that it use some variation of the following process, based on V. Lakhiani's "Career Map", both to understand the student and to encourage the student to understand herself. Divide a piece of paper into four quadrants: Self-defense, Sport, Exercise, and Philosophy/Culture. (It is possible to sub-divide each quadrant into 2 segments as I suggest in that early article, but for an initial interview, the simpler 4-area division is preferable.) Now tell the prospect that she has 12 votes, to be indicated by a checkmark or slash. She should divide her votes among the 4 quadrants as she sees fit. Perhaps 6 of her votes go toward self-defense, 5 toward exercise, and 1 toward philosophy. If yours is a strong sport-oriented school, you know she will not be a good fit. You can then either refer her to another school, another program that your school sponsors, or simply tell her what your emphasis is and have her decide if she

can adapt her needs to your instruction or *vice versa*. If, on the other hand, yours is a self-defense school, you know she is likely to fit nicely so you can mention the other minor emphases of the school, simply to let her know that she will not always be getting pure self-defense.

It would be easy, in this scenario, to falsely represent to her that your school fits her choices exactly. I would caution against this. The goal is not only to understand her preferences, but also to make her know you care about her preferences. By the way, that will, without your trying, also impress her with your integrity.