Exercises

# Chapter 21: The first few pages

## Exercise 1: Form your best title and abstract

This is an exercise to encourage you to find a good title and abstract for your dissertation.

1. Make a list of three or four possible titles for your dissertation. Try to make the main title intriguing and the subtitle descriptive.

2. Now reverse the order, putting the subtitle first. Which works best? Why?

3. Try out your titles on students working in similar areas or using similar methods or data. Which do they think works best? Why?

4. Now try out two different abstracts in the same way.

## Exercise 2: Assess an abstract in terms of clarity, content, and compelling arguments

Assess the following PhD abstract:

1. Is it clear and pithy?
2. Does it sufficiently emphasize the research problem?
3. Is it likely to attract potential readers?

**In Search of Marketing Management**

*Peter Lenney, Marketing, Lancaster, 2006*

*Abstract*: This empirical study attempts to craft a richer description, and deeper understanding, of the work of managers in marketing than that elaborated in the managerial work literature and within the marketing management discourse. Perspectives on both the character of the ‘content’ and ‘conduct’ of marketing manager work are sought. Several marketing managers, operating in diverse commercial contexts, were interviewed and observed. The field research deployed an array of longitudinal methodologies including programmes of diary-stimulated interviews, work shadowing, participant self-observation, and action research. A description of managerial work is developed that rests at an ‘ontic level’ between that of classical/‘Fayolian’ management theory and the conceptualizations generated through the empirical study of managerial work. The developed model characterizes the ‘substance’ of managerial conduct as the ‘shaping and sustaining of commitments’. The model, based on a metaphorical temporal rope, elaborates the various interweaving strands and threads of what is argued to be the quintessence of managerial behaviour, the forms and characteristics of organizational commitments, the character of their crafting and conducing, and the properties of the so-emerged commitment webs.

The ‘content’ of the subject managers’ work is elaborated through the concept of endeavour portfolios, and the inherently political, weak-situation/wicked-problem character of their endeavours is illuminated. The ‘rhetorical technology’ of the marketing discourse is found to permeate the content of the subject managers’ endeavours, and provide adequate labels for the strands and threads of their endeavours. However, outside of their use in the staging of truth effects, the processual prescriptions of the marketing discourse are not evident in their daily work. The marketing management discourse is found not to speak to the milieu or substance of the subject managers’ marketing management. This ‘substance’ rests in their pursuit of innovative reconciliations for the complex of contradictions that confronts them.

## Exercise 3: Get feedback on your introduction

Show the introduction to your dissertation to a range of fellow students. Encourage them to tell you whether they feel tempted to read more. If not, why? If so, why?

Now use their response to revise your introduction.