

Class Starters & Enders

Making the Most of Instructional Time Five Minute Lessons

Class Starters and Enders help utilize the last minutes of class when a lesson ends but there is not enough time to start another, or for an interest approach at the beginning of class. Mini-lessons correlate to GPS in the programs areas below.

The Waffle Shoe

Program Areas: Business and Marketing

Instructions: Read the narrative and make notes of important points, answer questions, and be ready to discuss this topic.

In the late 1950s, Phil Knight was the track star for the University of Oregon. He and his track coach Bill Bowerman were obsessed with winning. The two men worked hard to better Knight's performance on the track. Bowerman experimented by designing lightweight shoes for his runners. Knight said, "He figured carrying one extra ounce for a mile was equivalent to carrying an extra thousand pounds in the last fifty yards". Knight took his coach's idea with him when he enrolled in graduate school at the Stanford Business School. Here, he researched how lightweight running shoes could be manufactured cheaply in Japan and sold at low prices in the U.S. This is how Nike began.



In 1964, Bowerman and Knight started the business called Blue Ribbon Sports, later renamed as Nike. The company's first product was based on the shoe created during Bowerman's time coaching at the University of Oregon. One morning while observing the shape and form of the inside of his wife's waffle iron he came up with a great idea. He poured urethane into his wife's waffle iron creating a mold for the outer sole for a shoe, ruining his wife's waffle maker. Urethane, a plastic compound, is a group of chemical compounds that forms as a powerful rubber adhesive. He later developed and refined the waffle sole into a shoe. The urethane sole would grip the track more effectively than other shoes. The waffle shoe revolutionized athletic shoes and the running sports.

Runners everywhere were soon trading in their old running sneakers for the new "light-as-air" Nikes. In 1980, Nike shoe wear became one of the most famous athletic shoe companies simply by word of mouth, or viral marketing. Nike did not advertise on television until 1982 during the broadcast of the New York Marathon. After the broadcast, Nike quickly reached fifty percent of the market share in the U.S. athletic shoe market.

The first waffle sole paved the way for famous Nike shoes such as the Air Jordan. Today, Nike is a multibillion dollar business. Nike is now known for its premium brands, designs and expensive products. Nike has been successful because of its marketing mix. Nike now markets its products using celebrity athletes and professional and/or college athletic teams.

Bowerman and Knight's story of turning a passion and simple idea into a successful business exemplifies what it means to be an entrepreneur.

Review

1. What was the sole of the first waffle shoe made of?
2. How did Bowerman create the waffle shoe?
3. Name three ways Nike promoted its products.
4. What did viral marketing mean before the age of computers?
5. How did Nike's first customers become aware of its products?
6. What does it mean to have a passion for a business idea? What business would you have a passion to develop?
7. Nike broadcasted its first commercial during what event? Why was this the perfect event to introduce their product to the world?
8. **Discussion:** Knight and Bowerman were ordinary men with a passion and vision for track. Some may say it was luck that Bowerman created the waffle shoe that began a global athletic empire. If you could have the same success as an entrepreneur, what product would you create? What would your product's brand name be? How would you promote your new product? Write a paragraph describing your idea.

Critical Thinking

In Greek mythology, Nike was the goddess of victory. Do you think it was a smart business move to change the company name from Blue Ribbon Sports to Nike? What are the "pros and cons" to changing the company's name?

Write a paragraph supporting your answer.