

Welcome to the 13th Edition of the MBA Newsletter



The (newly renamed) Sir Alex Ferguson Stand

MBA trip to Manchester United

The MBA students went to Old Trafford, home of Manchester United at the end of November. After a visit to the MU shop where Christmas presents were purchased, the group was welcomed by the Manchester United Museum Manager, Damien and the Education Officer, Laura and enjoyed the newly installed audio tour of the museum. This was followed by a guided tour of the stadium, with the opportunity to sit in the manager's enclosure, come out onto the field through the players' tunnel and visit the changing rooms. Our excellent guide gave a history of the club and explained the facilities and dimensions of the club.



MBA students in the Manager's Enclosure



MBA students with Michael Bolingbroke MBA, Chief Operating Officer of Manchester United

After the tour the group was treated to an inspirational talk by the Chief Operating Officer, Michael Bolingbroke - who explained the business of Manchester United and its strategy. Interesting points were that MU is a £300 million business with its revenue coming from three main areas: gate revenue, sponsorship and media deals. It has a seat utilisation of 98% and is rated by Forbes as the most valuable club in the world. Interestingly its wage bill as a percentage of revenue is 46%, whereas at Manchester City, it is a staggering 109%!

Bill Faust Lecture



Bill walked into the room enthusiastic and confident, immediately making the class laugh and feel comfortable with his presence. As none of us knew exactly what he was going to be talking about, there was no enthusiasm or excitement among us at the start. Within the first slide of his presentation this soon changed, he engaged his audience and projected his passion for what he was talking about.

Bill and his brother have really killed off the traditional CV as far as I am concerned; it seems obvious that a potential employer is more concerned about the person he is employing rather than what he has done in the past, so why not show that as best you can?

I was so inspired to apply what I had learnt, I didn't even wait till I got home to purchase his book, as soon as I got sat on the bus I took my phone out my pocket and went straight on to Amazon. An inspiring workshop of how to present yourself, your

achievements and your career. Bill is right, you do need to sell yourself and a traditional CV is not capable of that. 'Pitch Yourself' is a must-have tool to get the job you want and deserve.

Phil Osborne Full Time MBA cohort 9

Biography: Bill Faust

Bill Faust has spent most of his corporate career in the international communications industry where he was lucky enough to live and work in London, Paris, Sydney and New York working with clients including BT, Campbell's, Mars, Alfa Romeo.

He is co-author of the international best seller 'Pitch Yourself' 2nd edition published by Pearson in 2006 (where he shows how to apply marketing principles to the recruitment process).

Benchmark for Business



A full, exciting and thought-provoking day getting to grips with innovation and ideas, critical factors when it comes to separating successful companies from failures. The ability to innovate, create and think differently is paramount to setting your company ahead of the rest.

Kjell Nordström and Chris Baréz Brown took to the stage at Benchmark for Business's 'Igniting Innovation and Ideas' conference in Manchester to explain how to do just that. Kjell Nordström's morning sessions were refreshing and thoroughly interesting as he spoke of a new 'normal' world in which we inhabit today, which is completely awash with paradoxes.

We are consistently being reported to and informed about crises across the world fuelling the population's underlying feelings of uneasiness and fear. However, we are currently in the biggest growth period in human history.

He went on to explain that this underlying uneasiness prevalent among the population is all part of something that he has labelled as 'Liquid Fear', an ever present fear without an identifiable root cause. Kjell suggested that two major forces have transformed our lives: Globalisation (the world is no longer a collection of nations) and Information Technology, enabling us to distribute information far and wide at no cost. The result of both these forces is that the world's innovations and knowledge pool is growing exponentially.

Kjell spoke about Capitalism as a really powerful yet uncontrollable machine and not an ideology. He then moved on to talk about the growth of women in universities, commenting that in his view women study and men do not, suggesting that women have a different attitude to risk (what would have happened if it had been Lehman Sisters?). For him the rise of women in business will change the underlying logic of decision-making.

In Kjell's opinion, innovation will be the one thing that will keep China from progressing as they are not inherently creative. This opens up a competitive advantage to liberal, democratic and open nations such as the USA and Europe (so perhaps all is not lost to China after all).

He expressed his view that the type of environment that celebrates and rewards failures is one that generates innovation and that organisations should not hide failure.

Kjell then raised his final topic of the day about what a super modern company looks like, identifying the critical dimensions of the Future Firm: Super Focussed - Narrow & Hollow - Heterarchical – Open System – Tribal Leveraged - Strong leadership.

Chris Baréz Brown's afternoon sessions introduced us to another approach, emphasising the human factors in innovation. He explained that for him there were three stages of innovation – insight, ideas and impact.

For Chris the magic comes from people – structure and processes do not create this magic. These were far more interactive sessions with audience participation and numerous activities during the afternoon.

Chris then took us through the various states of the brain: the Beta state (multitasking), the Alpha state (the creative state), the Theta state (sleeping - REM) and the Delta state (unconsciousness), emphasising that it is the Alpha state that needs to be encouraged so we feel relaxed and having fun – and therefore can be more creative and positive minded. The experimentation theme echoed Kjell's comments in the morning. As his session came to an end he warned us to be beware of stereotyping, that we were hard wired NOT to be creative, the importance of being fresh and that we need to take a different perspective.

Chris's talk was about actively encouraging us to be creative through experiencing real situations and experimenting. His approach was a fresh utilisation of creativity methods. A fascinating and insightful day leaving us all with an appetite for creativity, innovation and a focus on a positive and exciting future.

Excerpts from the published report written by MMU MBA students – Full report available at:
www.benchmarkforbusiness.com/email/NBM_Conference_Report.pdf

Cranage Residential Weekend



We arrived at Cranage Hall on Friday evening and began the weekend with informal discussions around the results of our psychometric questionnaires. We were able to make sense of how we perceive the world and make decisions in our work and home life. For some, the results were quite surprising. For others, not so much, but doing the test was useful for us all in one way or another.

Cranage Hall

The atmosphere at the hotel was quiet and relaxed, just what we needed after three days of strategy implementation! We retired reasonably early, bearing in mind we needed to be mentally fit for the business game challenge the next day.

After breakfast the following morning, we got right back into it. We completed some more personality tests, had another good natter and then by lunch we were psychologically ready for the business game.

The premise of the game was to make HR decisions in teams for a fictional company over a 6-month period. We had to make HR decisions for each trading month, some of which had knock-on effects, and others made an impact on the bottom-line of the business. The goal was to be the most profitable team after 6 months.

Split into teams, team CBM comprised of Chris, Bart and Michael (no prizes for team name originality). Team Brute Force comprised of Amanda and me (Stuart). We were outnumbered you might think! However, this was not the case. We breezed through the stages with the lads lagging behind us. Things got heated in the opposing team, with indecision causing tensions. A frustrated Bart was outnumbered on a key decision, which eventually led to their downfall. After 5 hours of reading, debating and decision-making - Team Brute Force came out as the worthy winners (of course...). Later that night, conversations in the bar revolved around the business game, some stayed up until 3am and one person was still up close to dawn!

Tired, bleary-eyed, and a man down the next morning, we began the day with an interesting introductory talk about our impending dissertation. By lunch, I think it's fair to say we were all ready to get back to our homes and veg out on the sofa and watch X Factor.

All-in-all the weekend was very good, useful and enlightening. Gill Homan, who led most of the weekend, was excellent, personable and certainly helped us gain a better understanding of ourselves. The venue was perfect; the guys at Cranage really looked after us. So much so, we went home a stone heavier, a vast difference compared to the outward-bound weekend the year before where we came home a stone lighter!

Stuart Turnbull EMBA cohort 3

Stephen Frazer Workshop October 2011

The Cohort filed into the MBA common room. With only a few of us from a finance background, there were some nervous faces among us. We had been given a brief case study to review. Stephen was waiting for us and after brief introductions, he got us involved.

Stephen's straightforward, hands-on approach soon alleviated any concerns we might have had. It was clear from the off, Stephen knew what he was talking about and wanted us to think about the key factors that could affect a business merger or acquisition. He was sharp, inquisitive and engaging.

The emphasis was on extracting relevant information from the financial statements available and making key assumptions about a business. His use of real world experiences to explain the complicated financial position the company in the case study was in, allowed us an insight to the multiple layers of mergers and acquisitions.

We quickly realised that mergers and acquisitions were not just about a bunch of lawyers and accountants looking at data and producing reports and contracts. It was about finding workable solutions to multi-dimensional problems and varying approaches to make a successful transaction or investment and not underestimating the human factors involved!

For those of us that didn't think finance was an interesting field previously, we were left with a new, intriguing perspective and are all keenly anticipating his next visit.

Paul Jains Full-time MBA cohort 9

Executive MBA - Outdoor Weekend in the Peak District



The get away for cohorts 4 and 5 to Bakewell was full of fun, laughter, hard work, adventure and challenge. No one knew what to expect but everyone still managed to throw themselves into the weekend completely.

The group was split into two groups the red and blue team, which created a bit of friendly rivalry while taking part in a never-ending list of team building challenges, including caving, cycling and sailing a self built raft. The weekend was non-stop but a great opportunity for the two cohorts to get to know each other, roll on the next trip away!

EMBA Cohorts 4 & 5

Cohort 9 F/T MBA Leadership Weekend, Buxton

Abseiling from a bridge, orienteering and caving were just some of the highlights of Cohort 9's trip to the picturesque Peak District. What sounds like a cheesy 'Team-building for managers exercise' was actually a greatly rewarding experience and good fun.

Two weeks into the semester, on a wet Sunday afternoon we left for Buxton. 48 hours and the occasional break from the incessant rain later, pretty much everyone felt different regarding their expectations towards the MBA, their colleagues, the importance of teams and their own roles within them.

Shortly after arriving, we were divided into three groups with experienced coaches. The goal of the first evening was to get to know each other better. Within minutes the images of the team members got more profound or adjusted quite explicitly. The last and much anticipated item on the agenda was 'Retiring to the bar!'

The next morning we presented our personalities in groups following Belbin's concept. With the knowledge of the different strengths within our group, we started first outdoor challenges like crossing 'quicksand' on barrels and 'deep water' on little pieces of wood. What soon became obvious was the need for proper planning, communication and delegation in projects. Weaknesses in these points were compensated with our huge team commitment and effort.

Our major mission was to design and build a raft. For that, we had to tackle series of tasks in order to earn funds. All three groups chose the most challenging tasks on offer: abseiling 50 metres from a bridge or being lowered 10 metres down a cave shaft and then crawling 300 metres through (official description: "dirty, very muddy") tunnels.

The earned funds were used at a – quite authentic – auction to purchase barrels, planks and string in order to build the rafts. Despite the efforts of the red team to sabotage by bidding for everything as they had surplus funds, everyone built their rafts. We then sailed them on the lake next to the build site, collecting a bottle of Bubbly that was secured to a buoy. Surprisingly, not a single person fell overboard and we celebrated with some fizz! Everyone was wet, tired, happy, closer and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Claudia Mohr Full-time MBA cohort 9



MBA Alumni Spotlight



Ros Hodges works as a Business Development Manager for Global Transaction Services within Citibank, N A, London Branch's Institutional Client Group. She studied full-time, as she believed this would have the quickest impact on her career, and completed her MBA in 2006

Ros wasn't able to go to university when she finished school so went straight into work. *"Years later, as a middle manager, I wanted to better my career prospects, and build on the knowledge and experience I'd gained, rather than start from scratch in a new discipline. I wanted to broaden my skills across the functions of an organisation, to learn more about their impact on each other and on the bottom line of the business."*

"The MBA is an excellent means to do this as I didn't need a bachelor's degree - just the ability and commitment to study at this level and my existing work experience."

Ros chose Manchester Metropolitan University for a number of reasons. *"The Business School is a high ranking, AMBA accredited university, which was important for me, as were its location and pricing."*

When asked about the most useful transferable skill she learned on the MBA, Ros said: *"Learning about so many different disciplines enabled me to look at business from a bird's eye view, to see the whole picture of how the different functions interact and where and how they contribute. It enabled me to simultaneously see the horizon and navigate the path towards business goals."*

What aspects of the course stand out? *"The MBA is a hugely practical course and, with careful choice of your modules, you can mould your learning to your career. As a manager who needs to achieve business goals through people, I found the work on the employee psychological contract in the Human Resource and Organisation Development modules important and useful. I also have to deliver and measure revenues and benefits, and the theories learned from the Balance Scorecard within the Finance module have helped me to be more effective in driving the leading performance measures within a project or business unit."*

Ros also learned skills she didn't expect to learn. *"I was able to grow from the overall experience. I observed how students from different countries and cultures approached*

a problem, how cultures work together, and how the perspective on the objective could differ as much as the result. I didn't identify how useful this really was until I was faced with a role in a global environment with competing interests. This experience then came into practical use."

The Business Schools offers a wealth of extra curricular support and resources, which Ros made full use of. *"I attended many of the guest lectures, particularly the industry speaker sessions. They were an excellent way to gain valuable insight into other industries and businesses outside my own experience. This aspect of the MBA can open up your career paths, and help students to identify other sectors into which they can transfer their skills and knowledge."*

Finally, would Ros recommend the MBA? *"Yes. It offers first class lecturers, support and guidance for students to work their own way to achieving their business masters degree at an affordable price. The Business School was active in ensuring that the needs of all members our study cohort were met, from providing personal tutors to guide each of us through our dissertation to offering us individual, constructive feedback on our work."*

The New MMU Business School Coming (very) Soon!



Connected on LinkedIn? - Join the MMUBS MBA Alumni Group now!

Your Views are Valued

Have you got any ideas for the MBA newsletter?

Any interesting stories, internet links, information, contacts or questions you would like to share?

If so, we would be delighted to hear from you.

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