

MBA

NEWSLETTER

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Jaguar Land Rover visit 15th October 2015

As part of Strategy Implementation, Cohort 10 and 11 visited the Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) production plant at Halewood, Liverpool. Jaguar Land Rover is part of the Tata Group of companies whose core purpose is 'to improve the quality of life of communities it serves globally, through long-term stakeholder value creation.' Since the introduction of the critically acclaimed and commercially successful Land Rover Evoque in 2011 the Halewood production facility has gone from strength to strength. The Halewood production plant produces the Land Rover Evoque and the new Discovery Sport model. The production plant operates around the clock (24/7) with an approximate work force of 300 personnel per shift.

The visit commenced with a review of some of the facts and figures for Jaguar Land Rover including the fact that only 19% of total sales are within the UK, similarly the rest of Europe and interestingly 25% of sales are now to China. [Sales of the Jaguar Land Rover models in China now exceeds all other 'markets' including North America at 17%.] With strong sales, increased revenue and profit and with new models in the immediate pipeline (F-Pace and Evoque) the JLR brand looks to have a secure future. The company attributes such performance to passionate and engaged people within its business.

Throughout the trip, the guide talked openly and passionately about the production facility and how Tata has injected investment into the research and production facilities. The production facilities are impressive; highly automated with a well-trained work force working to Just in Time (JIT) assembly techniques, each vehicle already sold. Although TATA are the parent company, this isn't very evident within the production facility perhaps a sign of the strong JLR brand. The strong JLR brand continues to drive sales in the far-east markets and the success of the brand will only drive further investment. JLR has

recently opened a Chinese production facility north of Shanghai to avoid the taxation on foreign imports thus to further improve sales. The salient question might be what affect will this have on the JLR plant at Halewood?

Despite the success of the Evoque models the tour guide talked of JLR not becoming complacent with wider company emphasis on innovation and sustainability. Overall, the visit to the JLR production facility at Halewood provided not only an understanding of the production facility but also an insight in the strategic direction of JLR under TATA.

Chris Aston (Cohort 10)

MBA Manchester Reunion November 2015

40 MBA graduates, students and lecturers attended the 2015 MBA reunion in Manchester. We were delighted to see graduates from the 2nd cohort (from the early 1990s) through to the latest intake in October 2015.

A wide range of international and UK professionals from diverse industries and sectors had a great night catching up with each other and recounting many MBA stories, particularly one from the various international study trip over the years.

A great time was had by all...and the suggestion that this becomes an annual event!

We're now looking at organising a full-day MBA refresher/symposium, with a networking dinner to conclude – Announcement to be made in the New Year.



Siemens Congleton Visit

As part of the EMBA programme students were given the opportunity to visit the Siemens Congleton factory. The visit followed our module of Managing for Business Excellence which allowed students the opportunity to see theory in practice.

Upon arriving at the Siemens factory we were signed in and made aware of the Health & Safety requirements as well as the fire evacuation procedure. The visit began with a presentation about the factory, turnover and products manufactured in which it was evident that innovation and continuous improvement was the corner stone of their success. Their continuous improvement methodology was of particular interest which was based around the lean manufacturing principles as well as encouraging employee engagement throughout the company. The Siemens factory had successfully achieved their 5% cost savings year on year through their employee suggestion scheme as well as applying the lean manufacturing principles which included Six Sigma and Visual Management.

After the inspiring presentation we were divided into groups for the factory tour in which mandatory white coats, safety glasses and conductive straps on our shoes had to be worn. It was clear that safety and products were embedded in the Siemens culture.

The factory tour included a detailed explanation of the production processes and it was evident that automation and innovation also played a vital role in their success. The most striking aspect of the factory was their housekeeping standards in which all walkways and production areas were clearly demarcated and based around the 5S Methodology. The factory had a practical layout which was evident by the flow of materials which supported the presentation we had received on value stream mapping. The Siemens products were handled and stored with care as well as being clearly identified throughout the manufacturing process. Replenishment of stock was mainly through their Kanban system which was of particular interest to many students.

The operational control in the factory was particularly striking through their Visual Management which included production planning, quality control, engineering and an employee skills matrix. Through these KPI's it was clear that the lean manufacturing culture was embedded in the Siemens factory.

Overall the visit was a great success as well as the generous hospitality received from the Siemens staff. The Siemens visit can only be summarised up as professional and an example of world class manufacturing. This experience is not to be missed as it is evidence of the Business Excellence Model in reality.

Craig Birch
Management Consultant (Cohort 11A)

Executive MBA Residential Weekend Buxton 2015

The Executive MBA Residential Weekend in Buxton should be renamed as the 'Rediscovery Weekend'. It has taught us many things, above all rediscovery of our fears, our passion, our talents and our social skills.

We had three full days of intense lecture, during which we hardly had a chance to get to know one another. Then we were asked to spend a whole weekend with some strangers. Living with one stranger for one night is bad enough but a weekend with twenty plus strangers, hmmm!!

We were given brief details of our activity throughout the two days. However, there remained many unknowns, about the activities we were to undertake, the team members we would join and above all not knowing how we would respond to spending 48 hours with strangers, added to our fears. Nonetheless, this fear was short lived.

Day 1

We arrived at the hotel close to 7 pm, on Friday. As soon as we unpacked our bags and settled into our rooms, we immediately felt at home and the fear started to diminish. Starting from the dinner table to the tasks performed later on in that evening, we started to feel at ease with one another. The organisers were fantastic at bonding the team together. We spend a good part of the evening working as a team solving puzzles and making plans for the days ahead. By the end of the night, it felt like I had known my team for months. We did not retire till late that night, drinking, sharing our stories and a few jokes.

Day 2

Early next morning we continued with our task. Unbelievably, some of the nerds continued with their puzzles until the early hours of the morning. We had to plan for the days ahead; what we were going to do, who was going to do what, what tasks would get us maximum points. Out came strategy masters, the action takers, the quiet thinkers, the team players, the leaders and the motivators.

By the end of the day, after abseiling, cave diving, walking, shopping and individual tasks, we were exhausted both physically and mentally. This exhaustion didn't keep us away from enjoying a fantastic meal, courtesy of our creative master chef, from Qatar. The number of dishes on display within such short period of time; even Gordon Ramsey himself would forget to say the letter F.

After the meal, we spent a good couple of hours in warm discussions, heated debates and playing card games. We did not retire to bed till about three AM. Needless to say, despite everyone's exhaustion, I managed to keep everyone alert till the next morning. My snoring made sure no one needed to set their alarms clock to wake up early in the morning.

Day 3

After the first 24 hours our team dynamic was such, we ticked like clockwork, each of us knew our roles in a team. This made the next task of building a raft seamless and effortless. With some negotiation at the auction from some experienced auctioneers, we managed to acquire the required materials to build our raft, our pride; which reflected every part of our journey. We put our raft in the water and we 'row, row,' rowed our raft to victory.



Reflections on the Rugby/MBTI Residential

It had been a hard 3 days having learnt about Strategy development and Implementation, the Rugby World cup was reaching the all-important Quarter Finals and ahead lay a residential weekend focused on MBTI. The question I was asking myself on the grey and bleak Friday afternoon as I made my way towards Cranage Hall was will this weekend really be worth it?

As we arrived at the hotel the group's mood was high and there was a general interest in the results of the MBTI assessment; would people be able to guess which categories they would fall into? Can we really be put in a box? Will those already familiar with the process have changed as their roles and profiles had changed?

After an hour at the bar to relax and unwind we headed into our first lecture session with the engaging Chrissy Ogilvie. During our first session we learnt about the history of the MBTI model. This session covered its inception to the modern utilisation of the model and culminated in the group placing themselves in the 8 different categories. During this session we had heated discussions and debates about how and where we thought we should fit versus where the questionnaire had positioned us.

From a personal perspective I was both surprised and slightly bemused at how the results placed me, was I a 'Thinker' or was I a 'Feeler'? As we ventured further through the process, it was easy to understand and see how it was possible to have one particular trait from a business perspective but from a social perspective this might differ.

After a long day the clock chimed 19:45 and it was time to relax and eat a fantastic 3 course meal. This was a great time to sit back relax and discuss our personal views on how accurate the model was. As the evening progressed and the wine flowed it was great to discuss from a different perspective and further bond as a group.

As I awoke slightly bleary eyed on Saturday I was intrigued to understand how we would be grouped for the challenge that lay ahead in our two teams. The challenge was based on a simulation game where every decision we made as a group would impact the next round. For some of us particularly the South African contingent this was not the key focus of the day, a date with destiny was around the corner. As for the bitter and

disappointed England contingent...we were more than happy to support the Spring Boks for the day! As the challenge progressed and the stress ratcheted up it was interesting to observe how within our groups we learnt the importance of engaging with our colleagues to ensure maximum efficiency. Unfortunately for the competitive spirit within me we lost the team challenge but more importantly South Africa beat the mighty Welsh in a gripping match, leaving the pain was short lived.

In high spirits I sailed into the final session of the day with guest speaker on Leadership, Stephen Branch, Operations Director of Northgate Vehicle Leasing. Stephen provided a fascinating insight into a long a successful career, spanning from serving as an officer in the British army to his current role. The main focus of the lecture was his model based on the key themes of leadership and how they thread together. This was a fascinating talk and has been summed up in the words of my fellow colleague Lucy Foster https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/leadership-golden-thread-lucy-foster?trk=pulse-det-nav_art. It was clear to see that his session resonated with a number of people on the residential.

On Sunday morning as the weekend came to its conclusion we were given the opportunity to work in pairs to coach one another. The focus of the sessions was based on our learnings from the weekend and how MBTI can benefit us through utilising it in our leadership and working practice. This was a fantastic opportunity to experience both a coaching role in a safe environment, as well as opportunity for honest reflection on your potential leadership blind spots.

When I drove away on the wet and rainy Sunday afternoon I was left with a new set of questions; Do I fit into the right box? What can I change to be a better leader? And who will win the Rugby world cup?

As I travelled down the M6 I was able to reflect on the weekend as a whole and contemplate the journey that I had just begun. I have been given a new set of tools and insights in to my role as a leader and now have the challenge of applying these in my developing career awaits me. So in answer to my original question it was a thoroughly worthwhile and enjoyable weekend!

Alex Brain

Professional Services Manger – MACS EU Ltd

China 2015: Scrambled Egg & Tomato, the Cricket Man, and Mao

"Well my girls and boys" this business trip was filled with never forget experiences of various guises!

Let's commence with the extremely informative and inspirational business visits:

Huawei - work environment we would all dream of being part of, incredible technological ideas and developments. Pity their distinguished guests were from the University of Manchester, but they made up for that slight faux pas with the only 5 star toilets of the whole trip! The restroom details will form a significant part of this experience and I do feel Armitage Shanks should explore the Chinese market!

CreditEase was our next visit, in a warm room, following a great social night; the potential for disaster was averted by a fantastic presentation, and response to his "interrogation" by the suave Roger. Interesting business model was shared and the further insight shared by the CEO Miss Wang was fascinating.

Our final visit was to the inspirational JD.com - the Amazon of the East. In the plush high-tech boardroom, following the detailed delivery model presentation and now customary grilling from the MBAs, despite attempts by Daniel to restraint Victor's questioning, the room was buzzing. Students appeared invigorated, despite the late night partying!

The 2 university lectures were excellent too - the information shared (& photographed to most iPads in the room!) will certainly contribute to our Take Away (not a Chinese

meal as we cannot face anymore Chinese food in 2015) exam.

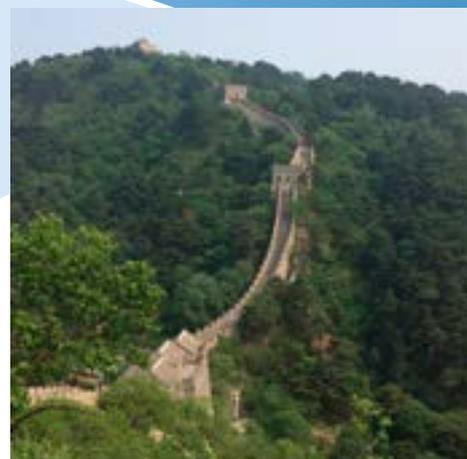
Luna, our business tour guide, definitely gave the trip the learning and business focus we, the students, desired. To visit the biggest internet trading company and receive a personal talk from the CEO of a significant and rapidly growing China finance company was brilliant.

Now let's discuss our cultural experiences - they range from the unforgettable, as they were incredible, to the unforgettable as they were the most off the wall experiences of our lives!

I've talked to most of our gang as to their favourite element of the visit and The Great Wall comes top with all! It was a fantastic day, including the "trundle down the toboggan". Now I confess this was one of the elements of the trip I was most looking forward to - pity my new Dutch friend was a little slow on the track, she was however fast with her temper and verbal abuse. Oh well another unique life experience!

Now for the bizarre - and I am not really certain which experience was the most surreal - the "Cricket Man" or Mao?

Let's paint the picture - you got to a house in Beijing. Traditional courtyard hutong, with pet pigeons, rabbits, dog etc. You are invited in for Jasmine Tea. Lovely. Then the host tells you about his fighting cockroaches, his crickets, his iguana. And he shows you them and feeds them maggots from a pan in his living room. You had to be there - a "You've Been Framed" moment.



The other surreal experience the Mao mausoleum - 40 years on and the Chinese people still immortalise this dictator. Laying of 1000s of flowers a day at his tomb, Sarah even experienced a gentleman throwing himself to the floor in front of her in worship - he was promptly escorted from the building by the security. I think all students struggle with the continued worship of Mao and cultural clash with our freedom of expression and speech.

I want to conclude with my new specialist subject from the trip - restrooms! Now I do at my age require regular comfort breaks and therefore do experience wherever I travel a selection of restrooms. I however experienced the worst and the best facilities in the world on this trip. Heated toilet seat in Huawei, holes in the floor, with ammonia nipping my eyes while I retch at the stench in Tiananmen Square. I have spotted a niche in the Chinese market for improvements in ladies (not laddies!!) restrooms.

Jackie Bell (Cohort 11)

The IoD Annual Convention 2015

A group of MBA students approached the IoD Annual Convention with some apprehension. We had no idea what to expect, or what the format of the day would include. The result was brilliant. A very professional, well organised convention with some high profile speakers.

We witnessed two lively panel debates on the future of banking and the future boards in business. David Milliband opened our eyes to the huge humanitarian effort being provided by the International Rescue Committee. Richard Scudamore managed to convince me (a non football fan) that there is more to the premier league than kicking a ball around. Simon Stevens CEO of the NHS told us about the strategy of the NHS to improve our health by looking at lifestyle, not treatments. Finally, Sir Ranulph Fiennes entertained and excited us with the stories of his amazing expeditions around the world.



Personally, listening to Luke Lang from the funding website Crowd Cube was a real eye-opener. Luke told the story of how a recent investor had pledged £1m to a business using his iPhone at midnight. An unheard of scenario only a few years ago - demonstrating to the panel of high profile bankers on stage that business fund-raising really has changed. Since the convention I have personally approached Crowd Cube to pitch a new business for investment - something I would not have done if I had not been lucky enough to hear Luke's keynote speech.

Michael Cowell (Cohort 11)