

MBA

NEWSLETTER

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- + Institute of Directors Conference
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- + Beijing - *Spring 2014*
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IoD

Prior to commencing my studies with the MMUBS, the annual IoD conference meant one thing to me. The location where, in 1991, Gerald Ratner famously (or rather infamously) described the products his business sold as “cheaper than an M&S prawn sandwich but probably wouldn’t last as long”. It’s probably no surprise that these comments have since become case study examples of the dangers in allowing image and branding to become disassociated with quality.

It was therefore of some personal interest to me when I was offered the opportunity to visit the IoD conference in the Albert Hall by the MMUBS.

Make no mistake the guest speakers are all significant players within business and government with the keynote speaker duties being handled this year by The Right Honourable George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who wanted to discuss the current state of the economy and what that meant for business in a Q&A session with Ian Dormer, the Chairman of the IoD.

Unfortunately due to his recent loss in the Scottish Referendum and subsequent resignation from the Scottish Government Alex Salmond withdrew at the last minute but he was ably replaced by Peter Kellner, President of YouGov, who made some interesting predictions for the forthcoming general election in 2015. If his forecasts prove to be correct then 2015 will have the most unusual election result in many years.

But this is what the IoD conference is all about. It allows a forum for senior business people to listen and network with the movers and shakers in international business who are there to offer their thoughts on the future corporate environment in an often thought provoking manner. Some of them, such as Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, have quite literally changed the world for the better (at least from the student perspective) while others, like Travis Kalanick, have courted controversy in their business model that shows no sign of abating with lawsuits, protests, accusations of sabotage and regulatory opposition all issues that he has had to deal with in recent months relating to all his innovative taxi service Uber.

Certainly I found it to be an excellent networking opportunity with some extremely engaging speakers that, should you be given the same opportunity I was given, I recommend you grab with both hands.

Obviously it goes without saying that if there are any spare tickets left next year I’d like to get my name in early.

Alan Gregory

Beijing

Spring 2014



The Beijing experience is fantastic, not only an opportunity to build upon the discussions that took place as part of the Contemporary Issues in an International Environment module, but also a chance to see first-hand what it means to be in business or study in China's capital. This was an action packed visit to a city that simply cannot be understood without a visit in person. Arriving in Beijing, the first point of interest to attract attention was the size and unique layout of Beijing Airport, a short trip to pick up luggage and then to meet our guide for the week 'TK' who will for ever be in the hearts and minds of the group. Four lanes of traffic going any which way proved another immediate insight in Beijing life. It is thought that Beijingers drive their cars as they once rode their bicycles moving from lane to lane to get ahead.

After only a couple of hours sleep it was time to explore the Olympic park. We all remember the iconic birds nest stadium that was the centre stage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Our guide, TK, said the stadium now lies almost dormant except for the rarest of occasions. Continuing with the Olympic theme, the group visited the legendary Beijing 'cricket man', so named because of his passion for breeding fighting crickets. The 'cricket man' lived in an area of Beijing that retains the traditional HuTong; the name given to the Chinese courtyard way of living.

One cannot think about China without thinking about the Great Wall and great it is! Built originally by the Qin Dynasty and 'more recently' by the Ming Dynasty (more input from TK), originally stretching over 8000km, it is truly extraordinary and perfectly unique. The day the group visited the weather was hot and humid and I mean hot - north of 35 Degrees Celsius. Coming down from the wall took the form of a speed crazy descent on a toboggan run. Not untypical of EMBA's to go full throttle only to be held up by a couple of people who were slightly more tentative.

The Forbidden City is at the centre of Beijing, as is Tiananmen Square - the square named after the Tiananmen gate of the Forbidden City. The picture of Chairman Mao, at the north end of the square, is a reminder of China's more recent past but as TK put it, the Cultural Revolution is now an economic revolution. The modern China is indeed a hot house of manufacturing and for the group this included a trip to a Hyundai factory where cars for the Chinese market spilled off the production line every 63 seconds or so, every one made to order. Even with massive exports China still has a big internal market (for cars anyway) but of course not everyone can drive their car - people are restricted as to which days cars can be driven. One alternative option to the car or bus is the Beijing underground. For those who used the underground it was clean, quick and fully air conditioned.

It's not possible to visit one of the world's premier cities without have a taste of the entertainment and night life. The Kung Fu show was enjoyed by everyone. A truly spectacular show, not perhaps as spectacular though as Andy and Simone's dance at the Asian night restaurant - the pair of them shouldn't give up their day job. Uptown Beijing has its usual bars and restaurants but none so unique as 'bar street' which is built around an artificial lake in the centre of Beijing. My favourite visit was the trip to the offices of QYER.com. This particular internet company has created not so much a travel experience site but a travel brand. With an estimated target market of 400 million wanting to understand what lies beyond China, the site provides travel planning information including, quite neatly, promoting QYER.com travellers to link up whilst abroad - a sort of support network.

On behalf of all the group who travelled to China, I'd like to say a big thank you to Daniel, Joy and Patricia for a fantastic trip; a voyage of discovery, memories and many friendships. A special thank you also to TK. I hope those of you reading this have the privilege of meeting TK on the next trip. Gan Bei!

Chris Ashton

Williams

as sponsor of Manchester Executive MBA Challenge

Alexandra Cook, Group Head of Development at Williams Group, explained the reasons why the family-owned leading retailer of BMW, MINI, Land Rover and BMW Bikes in the North West of England, was proud to continue its sponsorship of the Manchester Executive MBA Challenge in 2014 for the fourth consecutive year.

Williams Group has 12 retail centres in Manchester, Bolton, Rochdale, Stockport and Liverpool and in 2014 was selected by BMW to be the sole agent to launch, sell and support the all-electric BMW i3 and the plug-in hybrid BMW i8, the German marque's most advanced sports car.

MBA Challenge 2014

This is the fourth time the MBA Challenge has run. Along with the main sponsor Williams BMW, a wide number of organisations lent their support to the competition. As always the MBA Manager, Daniel Sheratte did a great job in organising the competition with the help of the Business School Marketing team and MMC Learning. Thanks also to Dr Stuart Barrett who led on the International Economics and Ethics Challenge.

Our warmest congratulations go to Mr Victor Padee, the 2014 winner of the Williams BMW Scholarship, worth £16,750. Victor was crowned the winner of this year's Challenge after scoring an impressive total of 90 points. The competition also awarded two runners-up, Miss Jackie Bell and Miss Lucy Foster, who both received scholarships to the value of £4,000 towards the

Alexandra said:

"As a business that prides itself on its sector-leading people development schemes including those for our middle and senior management we are naturally attuned to and supportive of the outstanding opportunities offered by the Manchester Executive MBA Challenge by Manchester Metropolitan University Business School.

If the North West of England is to maintain and enhance its reputation for producing the brightest and best business leaders from academia and industry, initiatives such as the MBA Challenge have to be championed by the corporate community of the region such as Williams Group and the other sponsoring professional organisations and employers.

Williams Group provides its own specialist training for management to benefit both themselves in terms of career progression, job satisfaction and fulfilment of potential and Williams as a business by nurturing and retaining the brightest and the best of its staff.

As a successful, family-owned business based in Greater Manchester and serving the North West and because we work hard to maintain our pre-eminent position in our sector and indeed to benefit the wider economy, we need to keep the talent we develop via our training programmes.

The message going out from ourselves, our fellow sponsors of the MBA Challenge and MMU itself therefore needs to be that we all pull together to provide the career package and social infrastructure required to keep that talent in the North West and to stop it being lost to other parts of the United Kingdom and in this increasingly global economy, the rest of the world.

We wish MMU Business School all the best with its ongoing Executive MBA Challenge, are genuinely delighted to be a supporter of it and say 'good luck' to all those managers and professionals who'll compete for the next scholarships on offer in 2015."

Executive MBA. All three are now on the programme and have already completed two units and the outdoor weekend in Derbyshire.

This year competition was hard-fought with a stellar field of contestants, all of whom receive a £2,000 scholarship towards their Executive MBA.

We would like to congratulate all the finalists and wish them all good luck with their studies.



 **From left to right:**

- + Professor Jean-Noel Ezingard (Deputy Vice Chancellor), Alexandra Cook (Williams Motors)
- + Lucy Foster
- + Victor Padee
- + Jackie Bell

Farewell to the MBA



“It is with some sorrow that I am writing this piece. I have decided that after over 10 years as the MBA Director and over 23 years at Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, to retire. I would like to see what else life has to offer while I am still fit enough and enthusiastic! I thought I would take this opportunity to reminisce a little about the MBA at the Business School.”

Patricia Rees MBA Director 2004-2014

When I took over from Gareth Griffiths (who by the way lives in my village in Wales – so I get to see him) in 2004 as MBA Director there was a full time programme and a part time programme. I particularly remember the annual trip to Prague with the full time students. Stuart Barrett and myself would try to persuade everyone to look at the wonderful sights (Charles Bridge, St Vitas Cathedral, the metronome, the old square and clock, the castle, the place where Mission Impossible was filmed etc.) rather than take hundreds of photos. We normally failed. Other highlights included our walk around Prague with the excellent brothers, the Skoda factory visit, lectures at Economics University, trips to the opera and a very avant garde play! Of course, who could forget the Hotel Krystal and the garage next door. The full time programme did not survive the downturn in the market and the visa issues – but it made it to Cohort 10.

Prior to 2009 there was a part time programme (which made it to Cohort 21). This was run every week in term time – afternoon and evening. I remember being in Ljubljana (in a tobacco factory) with the MBA in 2001 when the aircrafts hit the twin towers. Less eventful trips then took place to Beijing. (You will see from another article in this newsletter what an impact that trip still has on students). Another highlight of the MBA was and still is the outdoor weekend to the Peak district in Derbyshire. In more recent years the less energetic and more contemplative development weekend at Cranage Hall has been added to the programme. Here students understand their Myers Briggs profile and undertake the Business Game. Cranage Hall is set in beautiful gardens and there is a gym, swimming pool and the opportunity to have treatments (the food is pretty good too).

In 2009 it was decided to offer the MBA as an Executive MBA and run it in three day blocks every six to eight weeks. This format has gone down very well and also affords the opportunity to have some social interaction via the Thursday night dinner. The course recruits in January and October and has now reached a steady state of over 20 students per year (an AMBA criterion).

I have been extraordinarily lucky to work with wonderful people on the MBA. The teaching team has always been great and is now going from strength to strength. A special mention must be made of the programme leaders David Petty and Stuart Barrett – who have supported me unreservedly. I have also been extremely lucky in my course administrators – Ann Marie Macdonald, Victoria Stone, Catherine Osborne and now Joy Sadeghiani. Last, but by no means least, is the MBA Manager Daniel Sheratte. Part of the first cohort on The EMBA – he applied for the newly created post and made normal life for me possible! He has been pivotal in the development of the EMBA. I shall really miss working with my MBA colleagues.

And what of the students on the MBA? Well it is not for nothing David Petty and I refer to the MBA as “our beloved MBA”. I realise now that I shall miss the students and the great privilege it has been to watch them develop during their time at MMU. They have always been supportive and quick to provide quotes and interviews to promote the MBA. I have also been lucky enough to supervise a great number of them during the dissertation phase. It has of course, been great to spend time with them in Beijing, Prague and at Cranage.

As you know the MBA at MMU is accredited by the Association of MBAs. I am delighted that the programme has now been accredited for five years. This means it is in a strong position to develop even more, in the knowledge it has the support of its professional body. In addition, the programme will, in the future, entitle MBA students to Institute of Leadership and Management and Chartered Management Institute qualifications (along with CIMA exemptions).

I wish students, staff and alumni of the MBA the very best for the future and look forward to watching the programme grow from strength to strength.