

Starting in Strathclyde Business School MBA

Hi there, This is my very first blog and comes in extremely late (lets not get into the details of the cause) I passed out marine engineering from DMET (Kolkata / India) and have had hands on experience in the Merchant Navy for more than a decade. Started working as a superintendent engineer in 2006 & was based in Singapore... what next? The urge of doing an MBA was always there, but always found more than one excuse not to do it. This was the time when I met Nagitha & Michael... who convinced me "Its not too late; rather, it never is" (thank you both) This is how I quit my job & joined the Strathclyde Business School, Glasgow. The three most important reasons for this decision are: (a) 1 year MBA, since at this point of time, it would be almost impossible for me to be out of job for 2 years at a stretch, (financial reasons of course) (b) Global ranking, which (to me) is a good indicator of the infrastructure of the college & its standard of education (c) Location of the school: I have been associated with the shipping industry & operations / project management. Glasgow being a major hub of oil & gas exploration will certainly open the doors of further opportunities. The School: The University of Strathclyde Business School is one among the few Business Schools in the world to hold triple accreditation (EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA) and is ranked 30th in the Financial Times 2008 Global MBA rankings.

Front view: This is the door to our business school

The MBA program:

The Strathclyde MBA full-time course is a 12 months course – nine months class room studies and 3 months completing the MBA project. The course is intensive and relies heavily on teamwork throughout. The strength of each MBA batch is generally around 60 each year.

Major subjects covered in the course are:

Marketing Management, Operations Management, Managing People in the Organization, Managing Financial Resources, Managing Information, Managing, Strategy and International Environment and finally the 3 month MBA Project.

Apart from the above subjects we would also specialise in 3 elective courses of our choice.

About the Project:

The project examines managerial, organisational or environmental issues and gives a chance to put the acquired knowledge and skills during the programme into practice. It provides an ideal opportunity to build on what we have learnt during the 9 months of classroom studies. The primary aim is to reinforce the learning in an area of choice of the student, within organisations.

The course started in end Sept 2008. Will try to give a brief of what we have done so far:

The first day went off getting introduced with each other. Oh what a feeling! back to the school days after so many years – no blackberry, no emergency calls from ships, no surveyor to be cajoled to board my vessels in odd hours of the day, no fights with the quality department... Heaven on earth!

Students from 13 countries from very contrasting backgrounds have come for the programme, the diversity was distinct; presence of (Indian) engineers very prominent though.

After lunch, all of us got together in Lecture Theatre 1, the main hall where we would spend most of our time for the next 9 months.

Course coordinator Ms. Margaret English & the course director Dr. George Burt welcomed all of us to the Strathclyde fraternity and shed some light into the year ahead.

Moment of truth- the first class: The Learning Manager: This course is designed to raise our self-awareness and open the gateway for the students to life–long learning about ourselves in the role of a manager.

The course is about us, how we think, feel and behave, both as an individual and in the group environment. It is so true that individual self-awareness and effective group working are inextricably linked. As this course revolves around 'the self' we only could get out of it what we put in. The 3 day (very stimulating) course finally offered us tools, techniques and opportunities to know a lot about ourselves and guided us to be a learning manager. After this Dr. Burt started off with his subject: Exploring the Business Environment, a course that ran over two consecutive weeks, wherein each team had to make two presentations (for iteration 1&2)

This subject essentially taught us analysis of the factors in the external environment that would impact upon our client organisation & its operations in the specified geographical context. While we were expected to show the significance & implications of our findings for the client organisation, we were asked not to undertake or present any policy / strategy response.

Our case was UNDP and the research was based on the challenges that UNDP would face (and the implications thereof) in several countries of the Panama Gulf region (over the next 10 years) regarding eradication of poverty & promotion / protection of human rights in the region; the client in turn would undertake a review of their strategic planning and

policies in response to the issues raised.

Presentations (of each team) for iteration 1 were based on the existing knowledge, following the instructions set out in the one-day scenario process. This was generic in nature and not based upon any specific country. After the 1st iteration, each team was asked to choose their country of research : we chose Honduras. The teamwork on research & analysis that followed was absorbing, challenging and tiring, to say the least. End of the day after the 2nd presentation, we all came out winners : a gala cerveza evening at O’Neil’s……..

EBE Iteration 2 : Presentation by one of the teams – a feast of Post Its

Lessons learnt during the course of EBE were terrific : teamwork, engaging ourselves to various departments of research, time management and most important – the follow up of the Learning Manager – who am I , what are my strengths & where can I improve …. For example, being an engineer with “hands on” experience, I always thought myself to be an activist- somebody who is a go getter, jumping to do the work right away- I had a change in my self perception & now I know I am more of a pragmatist…seriously We were lucky to have a solid team : a real estate tycoon (lady with interest in Vastu & Sufism), a doctor (who has his own SME on software services and works in the insurance industry), an engineer who spent half his life under water (he is a very disciplined submarine officer in The Royal Navy), an entrepreneur who has made his mark in the small screen industry, and me – once a mariner, forever in love with the sea.

The great evening out at O’Neil’s passed too soon & Oct 3rd week brought in the package of Managing Informations – all the 3 subjects being taught simultaneously – Information Systems, Data Management & Making Decisions. For this part of the module, we were asked to shuffle & form new teams , each team having a mean of 6 members : since this time I have been part of Team 4. Key learnings from this package may be summarised as : Information systems : the nature & significance of IS in the present economy, challenges with regards to optimum utilisation , effective management and prompt changes in the systems with change in competition. We used Reuters (the financial section) IS audit as part of our case study / assignment, where Ullas, (ex Reuters) did most of the research work. Assimilating the various theoretical models into the business model of Reuters was indeed challenging. Data management : this brought back the real “study time” of the good old engg. college days, when nothing was really left to imaginations (just joking…this was only true while we had to solve numerical problems for the 1st semester exams ;otherwise, there is a lot to ‘imagine’). Learnt a lot into the aspects of data collection, how to sift the useful data from a pile, analysis, presentation (and manipulation of the same data to suit your purpose)- cannot appreciate more, how useful this learning would be as a future business leader, to get an overall view of a situation from a spreadsheet snapshot.

Making decisions : got a clear(?) understanding of how decisions are taken in an organisational context by business leaders ; how often ‘not so correct’ decisions are taken as well. Gained a good understanding of multi criteria / multi attribute value analysis. We used a software called VISA for this purpose, and did a case study (a very practical one at that) on a concrete factory , regarding its decision to increase its production per hour (and also the selection of its new location)- from 4 options. Our teammate Rajendran had been a stakeholder in this specific organisation & interestingly we arrived at the very same decision that this organisation had taken a few months back (sans the software)

Class of 2009 - The Cohort :Let me now talk about my friends here at the business school. We are a batch of 63, from 13 countries. Students are from various & contrasting backgrounds; an extremely accomplished opera singer who has his own music school here in Glasgow, (the London branch to start sometime this year), a very young and talented entrepreneur who has by now established 4 businesses and done his undergraduate business studies simultaneously, three doctors (one having his SME on software services, another being an expert in forensic studies), bankers, chartered accountants, insurance experts, an officer from the armed forces – Royal Navy, real estate biggies, marketing executives, retail marketers, people from the media, engineers from the software, manufacturing & energy sector, avid mountaineers, et al. By now you must be bored, but we have also finished Operations management and have just completed the two week session on Marketing management! that will be in my next blog, where we will also get to know about all the fun we are having out here, all that wonderful time we have had this Christmas… if you ask me, I having a wonderful time – absolutely!