

## **A Physician Starts Life Mastery Through Earning an Online MBA**

As a professor I'm always surprised by the gaps that brilliant students have in their knowledge of how to be effective in practical ways. Such students have already accomplished much; after all, it takes a special kind of aptitude to do well in the most difficult areas of knowledge. Perhaps because of having that rare gift some highly intelligent people are encouraged to focus solely on the most challenging subjects. When that happens, these talented students may miss the chance to learn important foundation skills that can make their knowledge vastly more useful.

Fortunately, it has become easier to fill in any such practical gaps later in life. Let's consider the example of how Thomas Bart, M.D. did so. Dr. Bart earned his medical degree at the University of Tuebingen in his native Germany. Following his residency training, Dr. Bart served in a variety of responsible positions in the pharmaceutical industry over the next 7 years and coauthored 7 technical papers. He found this product management work over those years to be very stressful, but not very intellectually stimulating. Missing that mental stimulation, Dr. Bart decided the time had come to earn an MBA degree to improve his qualifications for the type of pharmaceutical product management work he was doing.

Traditional MBA programs didn't seem appropriate for his needs: They required taking lots of time off from work and were very expensive. With a family to support, this was economically impractical. He was pleasantly surprised to learn about online MBAs which provided the liberty to undertake studies on a part-time basis without traveling to a distant location. The costs of such online programs were also a lot more reasonable than traditional resident MBA programs.

Dr. Bart selected Rushmore University in 1998 as the place to earn his MBA. He was especially attracted by the opportunity to study one-on-one with the many top practitioners who serve as tutors for MBA students. Unfortunately, soon after he began studying his work became quite demanding as he began an independent consulting practice. This meant suspending his studies until 2000. Work demands soon interrupted his MBA until he was able to resume again in 2004.

Upon his second return, Dr. Bart was pleased to find that he could pick up right where he left off. Here is what he had to say about this experience of restarting his studies:

“I was awed by the pragmatic attitude with which I was greeted after such a long time: No unnecessary questions and professional advice. I was awarded the maximum points from my relatively long list of publications, which covered not only themes of clinical research, but also management-related topics, which had relevance to my MBA study. All in all, I can say that Rushmore is to me the embodiment of the ‘good American,’ with its openness and friendliness, and its non-complicated focus on pragmatic solutions and its concentration on professional results. Those are the qualities which are in my opinion part of the ‘American Dream,’ and the attractiveness of the American society.”

Dr. Bart was attracted to personal change as an initial subject and learned some hard lessons about self-organization. In the process, he felt encouraged by the opportunity to receive practical suggestions for improvements in his effectiveness from his professors. In addition, he gained valuable perspectives about being more engaging with others through understanding and accepting his and their weaknesses. Finally, he added a thorough perspective on how a business person should address opportunities and challenges.

In preparation for his Rushmore graduation, Dr. Bart made the following comments about what lay ahead for him:

“Well, there is still a long road to go, I know. As we are all humans with mistakes, I shall most probably encounter difficulties, misunderstandings, errors of my own and of others, victories and failures. But I will certainly do everything I do differently than I did before my time at Rushmore. Thank you for your help, understanding and assistance!”

In 2006, Dr. Bart graduated from Rushmore with an MBA and soon obtained a new position as department head for medical coordination at Swiss Foundation Blood stem cells (a non-profit organization associated with the Swiss Red Cross serving as the Swiss National registry for unrelated stem cell transplants, in facilitating bone marrow matching and

stem cell use in treating leukemia patients). In 2007, he was elevated to the board of directors of this organization. He also heads the Swiss National Cord Blood Program for harvesting and transporting stem cells for treatment of diseases. In all of this work, he is using his MBA training to examine the work processes to improve productivity and effectiveness and prepare for challenges in future international exchanges of blood stem cells.

In addition to his stem cell work, Dr. Bart is engaged in writing a book that summarizes MBA learning into a brief form where it can be used to refresh MBAs in what they learned as students and to help MBA students prepare for their examinations.

As you can see, Dr. Bart is moving forward in helping others be much more effective in providing essential medical services. With his sound foundation in practical methods of accomplishing improvements, we can all look forward to better opportunities to enjoy good health.

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Donald W. Mitchell is a professor at Rushmore University. For more information about ways to engage in fruitful lifelong learning at Rushmore to increase your effectiveness, visit

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