

## **Enjoy More Confidence, Satisfaction, and Success with an Online MBA Degree**

Donald W. Mitchell

While in college, I had the good fortune to visit the sponsors of my scholarship, executives at the Santa Fe Railway. On that day, my hosts asked if I would mind going with them to a business lunch. I wasn't quite sure what they had in mind, but I quickly agreed. I was curious about what business people do when they get together.

Arriving at one of the largest hotels in Chicago, I was astonished to see that thousands of executives were overflowing a ballroom to hear a guest speaker. I felt like a fly on the wall as the people at my table discussed everything under the sun that had anything to do with business. As a French history major, I mostly smiled and nodded politely. Boy, was I in over my head!

I had the same daunted feeling about a year later when I returned to Chicago to interview for a summer job in customer relations for Inland Steel. I wasn't quite sure how steel was made, what customer relations were, and why they might be able to use someone who knew a little about French history and not much else. After accepting the job, that feeling continued for some time until I accidentally helped solve a problem for a customer and made my mark.

After college, I headed off to law school where visions of torts and briefs continually danced in my head like the sugar plum fairies in *The Nutcracker*. I took a detour when a friend encouraged me to enroll in some marketing courses at Harvard Business School. I looked into the classes and decided to go ahead. But everything was a mystery. Wherever I went, I had to ask the most basic questions . . . explaining that I was a law student who wanted to learn about marketing.

Once in class, I was buried in buzz words. What were they talking about? After a few weeks, I understood most of the buzz words and started to relax. I even smiled once in awhile. But I never said a word in class, even though that was a major part of my grade. Help!

I was intrigued by what I heard and became very interested in learning more. I began to ask classmates about how to gain more knowledge, short of taking a whole MBA degree. They told me that there were some jobs that were a lot like earning an MBA degree, and you could get paid while learning. They encouraged me to become a strategy consultant at The Boston Consulting Group. Classmates also told me about a marketing course I could take that was a lot like being a strategy consultant. Trusting them, I enrolled.

Five of us were put together as a team to do an assignment for a real business, one run by a Harvard MBA graduate. Naturally, I wanted to defer to the other people on the team. They expected that, too. But it soon became clear that I knew some things that they didn't. I began to offer suggestions, and the team gave me assignments. Before long I was pulling my weight. Boy, did I ever feel a lot better at that point!

With that success under my belt (it was the toughest course required before graduating with an MBA), I felt like I could hold my own in a strategy consulting environment. I applied for such a job and got one.

The effect was like magic. My confidence grew, and I found the work to be a lot more satisfying than what novice lawyers do. Gaining an MBA-equivalent work experience gave me a fast start in a very fine business career, one that has greatly exceeded my expectations.

If I hadn't studied with MBAs to find out what they do and how well I could do the same tasks, I don't think I would have had the confidence to start a business career. I might instead be off in a corner today doing research and writing long memos at some very large law firm. I am deeply grateful that I got that career-enhancing opportunity.

But not everyone can cross-register from law school to take a few MBA courses. I was lucky that door was open to me. Today, the door to getting a glimpse of MBA knowledge is more open than ever before, but the door leads more often leads to a part-time online MBA program than to a few courses at a bricks-and-mortar business school.

Why do I say that? Well, it's because of experiences of people like Mr. Adam Mayingu who have used an online MBA to gain the kind of

confidence, satisfaction, and success that I gained. Let me tell you a little about him so that you will understand my point.

Like many promising young people, Mr. Mayingu graduated from college after having done well at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, an East African nation. He started his career in 1989 with an entry-level job in information technology and advanced rapidly by building his technical skills. By 1998, he was head of Information Systems at a commercial bank. In addition, he had started some entrepreneurial ventures that he worked on during his time away from the bank.

While working for the bank, he made a substantial contribution by leading a project to install the first wide-area banking system in Tanzania that allowed bank customers to make transactions in their accounts at any one of the bank's offices. As a result of the improved service, the image of the bank improved, and it went from losing money to being profitable.

At that point Mr. Mayingu found that studying for an MBA degree was attractive to him. He wanted to be able to shift into a career in business management, to learn how to be a more successful entrepreneur, and to have the fun of learning new things. As a busy person who couldn't afford taking time off to study business full-time, an online MBA degree was the only option. After exploring the choices available, he selected Rushmore University for his studies.

Mr. Mayingu was pleased to find that MBA studies gave him better ideas for which personal businesses to develop and how to operate them. In addition, he gained a lot of confidence in his ability to present ideas in writing and through public speaking.

After graduating, Mr. Mayingu selected a new job as Head of Information Systems for the Public Service Pensions Fund in Tanzania. In this role, his expertise has become so widely appreciated that he now serves as a vice-chairperson on the Technical Commission on Information and Communication Technology for the International Social Security Association based in Geneva, Switzerland. Mr. Mayingu is confident that he can handle any challenge.

One of his future plans is to write a book about his experiences that he is tentatively titling "From the Shop Floor to the Board Room." He is also

considering enrolling for an online doctoral program to satisfy his love of learning.

How many talented people lack the confidence to develop their abilities in ways that would benefit everyone? I don't know, but there must be hundreds of millions of such people.

I hope that more of them will test the waters through enrolling in excellent online MBA programs.

Will you be one of them?

All you have to lose is your lack of confidence in your talent by building your knowledge and experience in practical ways.

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Donald W. Mitchell is a professor at Rushmore University where he helps students learn how to create world-class breakthroughs for businesses and humanitarian organizations. For more information about ways to engage in fruitful lifelong learning at Rushmore to increase your effectiveness, visit

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