

The Blue MBA – a resounding success

For a great many years now, the shipping industry has been a very tradition-bound business. However, in an intensely competitive and fast-changing global environment such as shipping, we cannot afford to be slow to embrace change or to lag behind.

To change the image of this industry and to move towards modernizing it we need to move beyond traditional leadership development models and become more and more active in identifying, grooming and recruiting the next generation of shipping leaders and building a vibrant and creative business community.

In 2001, in an initiative to move towards this ambitious goal, the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) launched a new Executive Leadership programme (the Blue MBA) - with some considerable success.

A holistic view

The programme adopts a holistic view of shipping, integrating commercial, technological and financial aspects as well as maritime law and supply-chain management and leadership challenges. It takes students to a top international level in business administration, reflecting the needs of the industry in a world where globalization, enhanced competition, market understanding, strategic planning and the speed of technological change place ever-increasing demands on executive management skills.

The programme

The programme consists of eight one-week modules plus a final integrating strategy project (thesis). In the process of working with the integrating strategy project (ISP), the students will make three presentations and the last of these will function as the oral defence of the ISP/thesis.

Each module gives a thorough introduction to reading material and motivates students for independent study. Students study the material in between modules and write an assignment for each module. As far as possible, these assignments will be focused on a problem related to the candidate's own company.

For the final integrating strategy project, top-

ics should be chosen for their strategic purpose and integrating function, giving participating companies a valuable and practical analysis. The final integrating strategy project serves two purposes: for the candidate, the aim is to integrate all topics covered in the programme by using "real world" data on a problem related to the candidate's own company. For the candidate's company, the aim is to have a strategic issue thoroughly analyzed, with proposed solutions and implementation plans. The last six months of the study is devoted to this project.

The graduates

With the help of a good number of graduates whom the CBS consider their ambassadors, the programme will make constant efforts to nurture the community spirit of the Blue MBA and find resources to maintain its reputation as a leading Executive MBA programme in Shipping and Logistics in the world.

The Blue MBA takes great pride in its Executive MBA graduates, who come from a variety of cultural, professional and academic backgrounds within the shipping and logistics industry. They are a very dynamic and talented group who share a common goal in the pursuit of excellence in their professional lives and a dedication to the improvement of the different aspects of the maritime industry.

We consider diversity in the Blue MBA's student body as one of our key success factors. This diversity has been present not only in the nationality of the participants, but also in their professional background, culture, as well as gender. We had 25% women amongst our last class who graduated in September 2007. This by itself has been revolutionary, and we feel that it is a great achievement to have such a good number of female participants within such a male-dominated industry.



Participants also bring a lot of experience into the classroom. The average age of our participants is around 37 years old, and many of them have been in this business for more than 12 years.

We draw our strength largely from the support of our graduates. They help us in the recruiting of the right kind of participants, mentoring, coaching and guiding students with great enthusiasm... they really do enrich our Blue MBA community.

The Advisory Board

Although very senior individuals occupying decision-making positions within their respective companies and representing different segments of the most prosperous industries in the world, our Advisory Board take time to help us advance our programme. They let us know when they think things are going well and give us straight talk when they think things are on the wrong track.

The current class

The Blue MBA programme does not consider its participants as students but partners in its growth process, so it is not surprising that the class feels more like associates of the programme and the Blue MBA becomes the community where they belong. It has been essential to make an effort to offer the best to our participants and to create an

environment that supports the philosophy of an open, caring and team-based community which is the foundation for such a co-operative environment.

The nature of the shipping industry dictates an international perspective, and in order to stay competitive, this industry is regulated constantly - not only by domestic, but also international requirements. The Blue MBA has always striven to reflect the international and diverse nature of this industry in the composition not only of its faculty, advisors and coaches but also within its student body. The current class is comprised of 35 students from 16 different countries with a diverse professional background which represents all segments of the industry.

Together, this group will acquire knowledge of the industries and branches they serve, perform industrial analyses with the aim of understanding how the industry is developing, and plotting its future needs. They carry out competitor and market monitoring activities; acquire the knowledge to understand the drivers of competition, diversification of products and services and the ability to react to change in commercial conditions.

Research Centre for Maritime Transport, Management and Logistics

The newly established Research Centre for Maritime Transport, Management and Logistics which is an integral part of our Blue

MBA will serve as the research base for the programme, as well as being a source for providing support and enhancing the topicality of the curricula. The research centre will play a major role in meeting current and anticipated needs within the industry.

This Research Centre is expected to address the issues of concern to the maritime industry. Given the broad scope of departments at CBS, the Research Centre can benefit from the expertise within these departments and also from the international industry experts who will add significantly to the global standing of the research being undertaken in an international dynamic industry that grows more complex and diversified every day.

The practical output from the Research Centre will be a combination of PhD/DBA level work, sponsored research from authorised bodies and ad hoc analysis. By this means the needs of industry can be addressed. All PhD/DBA and other programs will be approved following normal CBS procedures but the key link between maritime industry research and business will be a consistent theme.

The Blue Events & BIMCO

The Forum for Shipping Economy and Strategy, which was initiated and established in 2006 by a group of Blue MBA Graduates, runs six Blue Events every year. The idea behind this forum is to bring to Copenhagen



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some top-level speakers from around the world to give a presentation on a current topic which is of interest to the maritime industry. These events, which provide an excellent networking platform for the entire shipping community, are normally attended by a good number of BIMCO 39 members, who are great contributors to the Blue MBA network.

Additionally, BIMCO which has always been very generous in offering its full support to this type of initiative and higher level shipping education, receives the Blue MBA class participants during their first semester for a presentation on the work of BIMCO, which is highly welcome and appreciated by the MBA's, whose respective companies are usually members of BIMCO. ■■

Editor's Note: Irene Rosberg is Director of the Executive MBA in Shipping and Logistics (The Blue MBA). Irene is responsible for the design, development and co-ordination of The Blue MBA. She has a fundamental role in building global relationships and networks within the maritime industry on behalf of CBS. She also promotes research that could identify challenges and future issues for the maritime industry as a whole.

Happy Blue MBA Graduates – the class of 2007, where 25% of the graduates were women.

