



# Back to school

Nilesh Parmar shares his experiences of juggling work while studying for an executive MBA

AS THE saying goes – you never stop learning. The entire dental profession is about learning, from training in dental school right through to working in the most specialised area of practice, not to mention the ongoing requirements of fulfilling the required continuing professional development (CPD) hours. However, it's worth thinking about where there are gaps in your knowledge and how you can fill them. This is what happened when I realised my business skills were seriously lacking.

I often think that I must be stupid. No, I really must be! I seem to enjoy making myself suffer. There I was at the end of 2013, and my life was going well. I was an implant dentist, enjoying working in my own practice, as well as being a visiting implant dentist to another London-based practice. I alternated my work between the two, with four days one week and six days the next. I was making enough

money to pursue all my sometimes-expensive hobbies and interests, while still being able to put something aside for what I intended to be an 'early-ish' retirement.

## Making the decision

So why did I then decide to do a two-year part-time executive master of business administration (MBA)? Friends and colleagues have continuously questioned my decision... why are you doing it? What's the benefit? My answer is simply... why not? And here's why, ask yourself:

- Do you believe you know all you need to know about business?
- Do you feel you have the necessary skills to run, manage and understand a business?

I know I certainly don't! I can do teeth, and I've spent almost half my life dedicated to working on them. However, despite my

lengthy training it hasn't prepared me for the practicalities of running one, two or even a hundred dental practices. It hasn't prepared me to understand balance sheets, marketing or accounting. I believe that this is a major flaw in the current dental undergraduate training programme and it's something I'm hoping that completing an MBA will help me become more knowledgeable in.

I'm no stranger to postgraduate education. After dental school, I completed two masters degrees and then did a one-year programme at Warwick University. However, the difference is, and I think this applies to a lot of people who choose to do MBAs, is that they leave you with no formal training in business or economics that makes setting up and running your own practice that much more difficult.

## My experience so far

So what has my MBA experience been like so far? Well to start off with we had a week-long induction into the core topics of the MBA process covering:

- Managerial economics
- Financial management and accounting
- Marketing management
- Organisational behavior.

We currently meet on two Fridays a month

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with a few additional days fitted in here and there. I have taken the decision to not work in practice on Fridays for the duration of the course, leaving me free to work on my MBA as required, but despite this I'm not aiming to reduce my overall clinical workload as of yet.

What I must say is that I have found the organisation and the structure of the programme so far to be great. There are 37 of us in my year group and we are all slowly beginning to bond and get to know each other, and I think it will be an enjoyable two years.

So what did we do in the first week? Well, we started early and finished late and attended numerous lectures. No handouts were required as the university has issued us with fancy

iPad Airs to keep track of our work. We have been provided with an effective combination of group work and individual projects, and I have particularly benefited from a great team building exercise where we all contributed to designing, developing and shooting an advert for a fictional app. It was great fun – like being on *The Apprentice*.

**The future**

My impression so far is that out of all the studying I have ever done, I think the MBA will be the most challenging.

I say this, as we are not solely just students, we also have full time jobs and careers to take care of, not to mention that several people on the course also have new born babies and young children to consider. We all have far different responsibilities to take care of now than when we first headed off to dental school all those years ago, so ultimately it will be a challenge for us all.

But what a challenge! I have a feeling that it's already making waves and is definitely influencing the way I now think and do things

in practice. This can only be a good thing... right? I will keep you posted! ■

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