

WHAT OUR ALUMNI SAY



CHERYL NEX, PRESIDENT, EP CANADA. EMBA ALUMNUS 2006

Cheryl Nex was the Executive VP with EP Canada when she decided to do the EMBA. "After 17 years, the company planned to promote me to President. I didn't need an MBA to get there, but I knew I'd be better at the job if I had one." She was initially drawn to another MBA program, but attending an EMBA information session changed her mind. "It was clear that SFU Business put more emphasis on student participation. It seemed to be more about the students' needs and less about the university brand."

The program more than exceeded her expectations. "They said we'd learn as much from the people around us as from the pros. I didn't really believe it would happen that way, but it did. The power of the cohort was amazing and impressive. I was so surprised to feel the benefit of their wide-ranging perspectives and experiences. You don't know until you're there, experiencing it, working together through the challenges."

Cheryl also felt that the curriculum was well-designed. "The leadership and strategic components of the program built on one another. It really felt like we were headed somewhere." The relevant course content was enhanced by the quality of teaching and passion of the instructors. "Leyland Pitt, professor of Marketing, was a rock star."

"Personally, I'd go back and do it again in a second. I have been enriched by it. It was hard work, but there was such support—for getting it done, and getting it done well. The cohort, team and pros all held us to a high standard."

JOSEF PACH, DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT, TELUS. EMBA ALUMNUS 2006

Josef Pach went from Manager to Director of Environment for TELUS in 2005, a promotion that was contingent on getting his MBA. "I did my research, looking at costs, course content, format, etc., and the EMBA provided a better mix. I wanted to be in a classroom, face to face with people of diverse backgrounds. And that's what I got."

He found the curriculum very focused on the challenges faced by those in senior management roles, and it's been highly relevant. "Not only am I managing a team of self-motivated and high-performing professionals, but I must also manage upwards within the organization. The program has helped me deal with issues within my team, and I've gained a lot of confidence in my own abilities. Now when I'm presenting to the company's Executive Leadership Team, I'm confident that they'll take me seriously."

He's quick to point out that the EMBA differs from most graduate programs. "We were treated more like customers than students. Any time we had a concern it was dealt with right away."

For his final project, Joe did a competitive analysis of the wireless telecommunications market in Canada. "This was a big challenge for me. I reached into areas I knew nothing about and learned a lot about the industry. It was great to take on the challenge and succeed."

MATTHEW JANES, PRESIDENT, RESONANCE TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL. EMBA ALUMNUS 2004

While doing his EMBA, Matthew Janes entered the Telus New Ventures BC competition, and won with his technology for driving piles into harbours using high-frequency vibrations. He's now the President of Resonance Technology International, a company he started while in the EMBA program. "I wasn't sure how I was going to exploit the technology I'd developed, whether I would take it to another company or try to do something on my own. The EMBA gave me the confidence to raise the money and launch it myself. I also met one of my business partners in the program."

Before the EMBA, Matthew was working as a consultant in the foundation construction industry. "I wanted an MBA in order to acquire soft skills like organizational behaviour and strategy. I chose SFU's EMBA because I wanted to sit in an actual classroom, with other mature students, and I didn't want to go back to school full-time."

He thinks that the classroom experience is one of the program's greatest assets. "You're in a group of professionals with an average of 10+ years of experience, and you're working together on a regular basis. The calibre of students was so high that it didn't matter which Prof was presenting; there was always an expert in the room. It's a real advantage over an EMBA that's delivered electronically. I think most of the big universities are moving away from that format because the quality just isn't the same."

The program was well-targeted to the challenges he's faced in launching and managing his own business. "Everything was relevant, from accounting to handling HR issues to organizational development and strategy." Assessing the different ways to finance a company was especially pertinent as Matthew began to plan the launch of his own business.

KEITH LOWNIE, CA, ACCOUNTING INSTRUCTOR, UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY. EMBA ALUMNUS 2006

For Chartered Accountant Keith Lownie, completing the EMBA has been a step towards the lifestyle he always wanted, allowing him to combine a consulting business with teaching at the University of the Fraser Valley. "It provides me with a good income, and I still get plenty of time off for windsurfing and other recreational activities."

Before doing the EMBA, Keith taught at BCIT on a contract basis. He knew he needed an MBA or PhD in order to secure a full-time, permanent faculty position. The search for a part-time program and a traditional classroom environment led him to SFU Business, and the job offer came just as he was finishing his thesis. "Without the EMBA they would never have hired me as a full-time instructor."

As an educator himself, Keith was particularly impressed with the calibre of teaching in the program. "I had some really stellar instructors. I enjoyed watching them teach and learning from their teaching methods." The team environment also opened his eyes. "I learned that I don't know everything, and I can't do it all alone."

JOEL JEANGRAND, PRESIDENT, PEMBERTON POWER CORP. EMBA ALUMNUS 2005

Joel Jeangrand was working in the mining industry in Asia, from Hong Kong, when he realized it was time for a major change. "I thought, I'm approaching 40, and this is not the path I wanted to take with my life." He decided that an MBA would give him new career tools and a new perspective, and he began the EMBA a day after relocating to Vancouver. Absorbing so much change all at once presented its challenges, but he had a lot of support from his peers, the school and the professors. "I'm very happy I did it."

He worked in mining again after graduation, but he'd always wanted his own business, and doing the EMBA was a stepping stone to getting there. "The EMBA gave me the tools to look at the big picture and figure out how to approach the financial considerations." Now he's the President of Pemberton Power Corp. and a co-founder of the company. "Every day I use concepts from about half of the EMBA courses."

He appreciates the fact that some of the professors brought corporate experience to the classroom. "Their expertise wasn't just academic. It came from the real world, and that's so important to the learning environment."