

WHAT OUR ALUMNI SAY



JOYCE YIP, STRATEGIC SUPPLIER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LEAD, AFCC AUTOMOTIVE FUEL CELL COOPERATION CORP. MOT ALUMNUS 2007.

An engineer with Ballard Power Systems, Joyce Yip had a personal fascination for the commodities market. Noticing the price of platinum soar, and being aware of the high platinum content of Ballard's fuel cell stack products, she concluded that Ballard should develop a strategy to protect itself against market volatility. She took her idea straight to the CEO, proposing it as her MOT Applied Project. Because the case was so relevant to Ballard's business, it won the interest of the executive team, who understood that the business strategy training she'd acquired allowed her to see the organization's big picture. She began working with the Supply Chain, Operations, Marketing, Finance, and Research and Development to further her knowledge of Ballard's business cases. Concluding the project, she provided strategic recommendations for new pricing strategies to mitigate Ballard's risk.

In addition to engineering and commodity markets, Joyce had more than a passing interest in marketing. Two months after completing her MBA in SFU Business's MOT program she became a Market Analyst whose first case was to evaluate the market potential for Ballard's auxiliary power units. "When I survey customers to ask about barriers to developing our technologies, I can speak to both the scientists and the marketing departments. By combining my engineering background with what I learned in the MOT, I connect with both sides."

It was another step towards her future goal of becoming a Product Manager. "Lots of scientists see the data," she says. "But scientists who do the MOT understand its commercial opportunity. They see how the data can become of value."

MARI NURMINEN, LEAD ANALYST FOR THE PREMIER'S TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL. MOT ALUMNUS 2006.

Mari Nurminen has a background in development projects in the fields of technology and industrial design, and the MOT's focus on innovation seemed like the right fit for her skills and interests. "The program has a really good balance of cases, lectures, individual projects and group learning. Our cohort was a tight group built on co-operation, not competition, and we still meet regularly."

"The Applied Project was a great way to practice what I'd learned. Within the project framework there was a lot of flexibility, so I could tailor things directly to my client's needs." That client was Philips Design, and Mari's project was to build a business case for them. "I got a lot out of the experience and they were really happy with the work."

Now with the Premier's Technology Council, Mari recently contributed to the Innovation and Commercialisation project for the PTC's 10th Report. "What I learned in the MOT was so relevant. Instructors taught me about innovation not just on a business level, but from the sector and government point of view as well. Having the big picture made a real difference."



JONATHAN CARRIGAN, PRODUCT DESIGN MANAGER, CBC. MOT STUDENT.

Jonathan Carrigan has seen firsthand the difference having an MOT MBA can make to your career. His supervisor went on maternity leave, and instead of being promoted to her position he was leap-frogged by someone who had less experience – but who did have the MOT. After that, his decision was made.

And it was the right decision for him. “Don’t think of it as an automatic ticket to success, so much as a tool-box for getting there. It opens doors. Everything you do and say has a lot more credibility, and you can more efficiently leverage your past experiences.”

From the start, the MOT was a good fit for Jonathan. “It became obvious immediately that even generic courses like Managerial Economics were couched within technology. That’s how the MOT connects the dots between an MBA skill set and the realities of the technology environment. I quickly learned how to sift through huge quantities of material and focus on what was relevant. That skill has been of huge benefit in my career and in my life.”

The Career Management Centre also played a significant role in Jonathan’s success. “The services are integrated right into the program and they really make you feel prepared for your next career transition.”

DUHANE LAM, PRINCIPAL OF JETSTREAM DESIGNS INC. AND PART-OWNER OF WEST POINT CYCLES. MOT ALUMNUS 2002.

What really impressed Duhane Lam about the MOT was the people in the program. “Not just the instructors, but my cohort members and what they brought to the table. I think that’s the real value of an MBA: the business theory is made more relevant by the real-world experiences of your peers. Also, Because the MOT program is a newer MBA program, it’s more innovative than some. It had a buzz to it that was almost like being part of a startup.”

“Because of the MOT I was able to take on senior management positions that weren’t just about technology. If you just have a tech background people tend to see you primarily in tech roles. Learning skills like effective listening helped a lot, because management is all about people – even in the technology industry.”

“Doing the MOT was an excellent investment of time and money, and the people I know who did it have found it to be of real personal and professional benefit.”

FREDERICA BELL, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT, ICO THERAPEUTICS. MOT ALUMNUS 2007.

The MOT first got Frederica Bell’s attention when a colleague who had just completed it was hired into a position she had sought. She had a degree in biology and wondered whether her lack of business experience might be holding her back, but she didn’t want to commit the time required for a commerce degree.

Since completing the program, she’s found a new confidence when it comes to tackling a strategic problem or issue. The Applied Project in particular provided an excellent challenge. “Most of my peers did a project for a company they already worked with, using it as an opportunity to move up. Instead, I chose an area entirely new to me and saw it as a chance to explore something different, broadening my range of experience.”

How has it affected her career? “It opened doors. New challenges are put in front of me as a result of having the MOT.”