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European business school ranking 2014

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Della Bradshaw

Are US business schools starting to follow the European model of social inclusion? If so, why might that be?

During a recent trip to New York I was taken aback when a business school boss used a word I thought I would never hear a US dean utter: "inclusion". His school, he said, was looking at ways to ensure those from poorer or disadvantaged backgrounds could experience the sort of education usually reserved for the affluent.

Of course, "inclusion" is a word and a concept that has become second nature to European universities and business schools – in theory though not always in practice. For years prestigious universities in Europe, such as Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, have been striving to distinguish between the social and intellectual elite.

In France, the Grandes Ecoles have spent the past decade trying to prove they welcome and support those from Paris's *banlieues* as well as those from Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Some have succeeded, others have not.

But the top US schools have always prided themselves on being elite and teaching the elite. Their funding model – both the higher fees they charge and the endowments they attract from graduates – has done little to dispel this idea.

Until now, that is. So, are US business schools starting to follow the European model of social inclusion? If so, why might that be?

The second question is easier to answer than the first. The banking crisis and subsequent recession in the US have encouraged a more nuanced attitude to money and wealth. Perhaps as a result of the recession and unemployment, young people are also looking for a different social, educational and employment contract. The pursuit of wealth and power does not necessarily drive teenagers and twentysomethings' choice of university in the way it did for many of their parents.

If US universities really are following their European peers it will not be the first time. The recent adoption of the masters in management degree format in top US schools such as Kellogg, Duke and Michigan Ross is one example. The European-style one-year MBA is also proving increasingly popular in North America – SMU Cox is the latest business school to adopt this accelerated format. When it comes to teaching styles and curriculums, action learning and MBA consulting projects, popular in Europe for 50 years, have also been adopted by the US in the past decade.

Programme structure is one thing, but the broad ethos of education is another matter.

Of course, the big advantage for US business schools is that they have the money to fund scholarships for disadvantaged students. Traditionally scholarships at North American business schools have been used to lure the brightest students, often those with the highest GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) scores, regardless of their financial backgrounds.

Attracting additional funds for scholarships from alumni is a relatively easy task for US business schools that have huge fundraising departments. But how do European business schools fund their "inclusive" good intentions at a time when their own finances are under growing pressure?

Take the French Grandes Ecoles, which are facing swingeing cuts as their parent chambers of commerce see their revenues shrink. Compounding the schools' problems, the apprenticeship tax, which has always been a second income stream, is also being slashed. Some French schools face losing 25-35 per cent of their revenues in the next few years. Whatever these institutions' ambitions for inclusivity, their biggest challenge will be to retain their existing staff and fund existing salaries.

The situation is not much better in most of continental Europe, where state-funded universities dominate the business education sector. All have to try and cut costs while diversifying their sources of revenue.

In the UK a sharp hike in fees, especially at undergraduate level, has transferred the cost of education from the state to the individual, although fees for undergraduate degrees are still less than half those charged at comparable universities in the US. At the University of Pennsylvania, one of the universities that has an undergraduate business programme, undergraduate fees are more than $47,000, for example.

Perhaps the most depressing thing for European business schools is that just as their US peers show signs of moving towards the more liberal and inclusive education policies favoured in Europe, European schools are being forced to adopt US models of funding.

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Towering ambitions

European schools are consolidating at home but expanding abroad. By Della Bradshaw

The past year for European business schools has been a tale of two economies. Economic stagnation at home has resulted in consolidation, while economic growth overseas, especially in Asia, has meant rapid expansion for European business schools into these markets.

For many, the bid to teach in Asia is about more than the business opportunity: it is about the aspiration to become a globally recognised business school and one of the world's top education players.

A handful of leading institutions, such as London Business School, Insead, Iese and HEC Paris, have already made the leap to global recognition.

"There are now several business schools in Europe with strong programmes, franchises and faculty," says Peter Tufano, who was appointed dean of Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford in 2011, joining from Harvard Business School. "European business schools have strengthened considerably in the past quarter century."

But there are some notable regional exceptions: there are no German schools in this global elite, for example. This will change, believes Udo Steffens, president of Frankfurt School of Finance & Management. "In Germany there are a few universities that are moving towards what we feel is an international business school," he says. "These schools recruit internationally and they place internationally. In five years there will be a world-class business school in Germany."

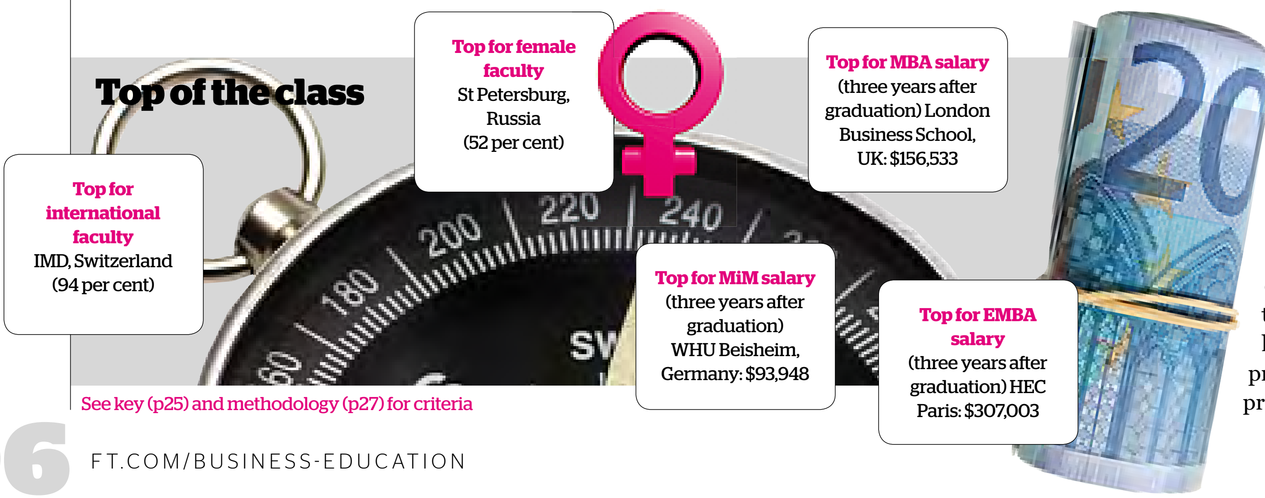
Others are less optimistic about European schools. Kai Peters, chief executive of Ashridge Business School in the UK, says that for those in the middle ground the situation "will get uglier", with few places to hide. "The only safe spaces are local provision and a solid undergraduate programme," he argues.

This "holed middle" concept, as Insead dean Ilian Mihov calls it, has two causes. The first is the rise of online learning, the second the rise in fees. "Students are saying, 'if I can't get an MBA from a top school, why bother?'," he says.

Culture and language are two of the hurdles for this emerging global model, but perhaps the biggest stumbling block is money, and the funds needed to achieve global reach. The past decade has seen French business schools, which operate outside the traditional university system, adopt a merger strategy to achieve scale and offset risk.

In the UK, the two most prominent stand-alone business schools have followed suit. Henley merged with the University of Reading in 2008 and earlier this year Ashridge announced its plans to merge with Hult Business School.

But mergers bring their own problems. Prof Peters says the Ashridge-Hult merger has raised questions about how to align UK and US degree-awarding powers, how to deal with accreditations and how to manage professors and programmes. "Who owns the programmes – the business



See key (p25) and methodology (p27) for criteria

ILLUSTRATION: NICK LOWNDES PHOTOS: DREAMSTIME

EUROPEAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Top 25 European business schools in 2014

Rank	School name
1	London Business School
2	HEC Paris
3	IE Business School
4	Esade Business School
5	Insead
6	University of St Gallen
7	Iese Business School
8	SDA Bocconi/Università Bocconi
9	IMD
10	University of Oxford: Saïd
11	Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University
12	ESCP Europe
13	Imperial College Business School
14	EMLyon Business School
15	Essec Business School
16	Vlerick Business School
17	Edhec Business School
18	Mannheim Business School
19=	City University: Cass
19=	Warwick Business School
21	ESMT - European School of Management and Technology
22	Cranfield School of Management
23	Tias Business School
24	Eada Business School Barcelona
25	Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics

'We are moving towards a commoditisation of products and prices. Business school deans have to be obsessed with differentiation'

DOMINIQUE TURPIN, PRESIDENT, IMD

schools or the professors?" he asks. "There is more centralised control in the UK and more faculty trust in the US."

Even single-country mergers are not easy, says Frank Bostyn, dean of Neoma, the business school created by the merger of two French Grandes Ecoles in Rouen and Reims. "In a merger you always have to take the hard decisions up front," he says. "You only need one finance director and you have two."

The adoption of a new name – Neoma – has also created issues around brand recognition. In France, Neoma's new name is already quite strong, Prof Bostyn says, but "in the rest of the world it is another story – we are not automatically known".

For those that do make a bid to be global, differentiation is key, believes Dominique Turpin, president of IMD in Switzerland, the executive education specialist. "We are moving towards a commoditisation of products and prices. Business school deans have to be obsessed with differentiation."

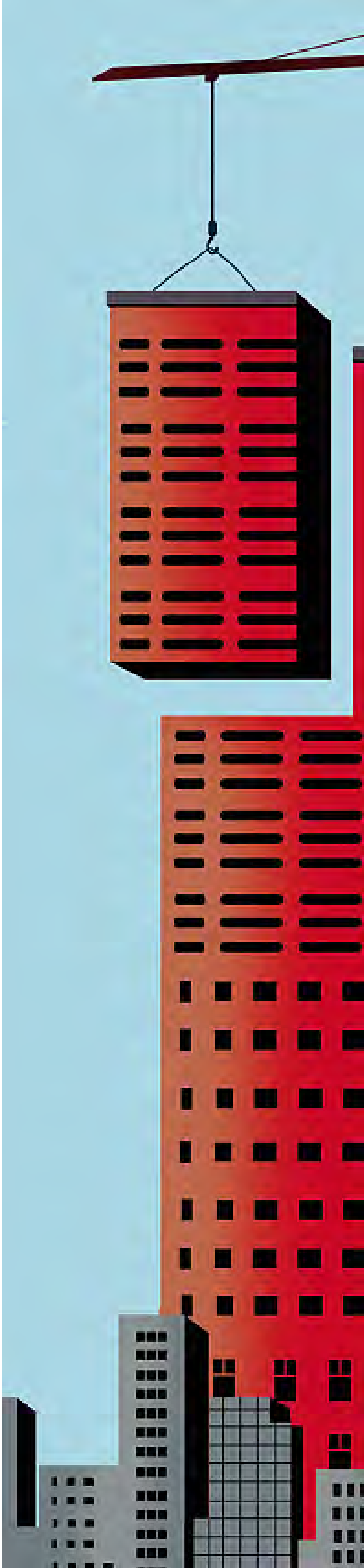
Overseas alliances at degree level are increasingly popular as a way to differentiate the global from the local and regional. This March, IMD announced the launch of an executive MBA with private business school Cheung Kong in Beijing, and in June, London Business School and Fudan University in Shanghai announced they would teach a double-degree masters in management programme.

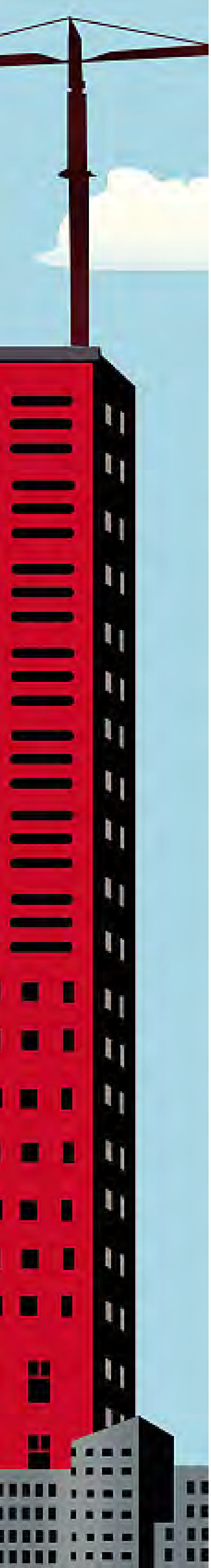
In October, Spanish business school Esade joined the club. It is launching a dual-degree MBA with Guanghua School of Management at Peking University in September 2015. At around the same time two French business schools, Audencia and ESCP Europe, also announced alliances – Audencia with two Beijing institutions, Tsinghua University and Beijing Institute of Technology, and ESCP with Tongji University in Shanghai.

Frank Vidal, dean of Audencia, believes China is now a secure market for French companies. "We have many alumni working for French companies in China. China now is in the regular course of business."

The big unanswered question is when Asian business schools will join the cadre of globally recognised players. The biggest obstacle is securing high-quality professors, says Insead's Prof Mihov. "It is still difficult to attract top faculty to places outside the US and Europe. The attraction is increasing, but it is not a big movement and it takes time to build a vibrant academic culture."

Twenty-five years from now there will be top Asian business schools, but they will be in addition to US and European schools, not in place of them, believes Saïd's Prof Tufano. "I would be shocked if there were no top business schools in the UK and Europe," he says.





Poll: a degree of protection

How have graduates from European business schools weathered the storm of the global economic downturn?

About 40 per cent of graduates who responded to an FT poll agreed a faltering economy had a negative impact on their careers. More than 1,560 respondents to the survey completed an MBA, EMBA or masters in management degree in 2010 or 2011, with 70 per cent now based in Europe.

Of those who said they were affected, 67 per cent cited fewer job vacancies, 41 per cent reduced opportunities for promotion and 36 per cent loss of earnings or bonuses. A minority (13 per cent) were made redundant.

Some 77 per cent believed their business school education had helped them deal with the slowdown. They said the skills and knowledge gained from their studies and the job prospects afforded by their degree gave them a competitive edge.

After graduation, nearly 40 per cent said their schools offered them support in the form of ongoing training, access to networking events and advice from the careers service.

Despite challenging times, 72 per cent remain positive about their career prospects in the next year, with half the group expecting their country's economic outlook to improve.

However, a third of graduates based in Europe would consider a move to another country within a year to further their career. The top destination of choice is the US, named by 53 per cent of the group, followed by the UK and Switzerland. - **Wai Kwen Chan**

A third of graduates based in Europe said they would consider a move to another country within a year to further their career

Weathering the storm: most respondents believed their business school education had helped them deal with the slowdown

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Simon Caulkin

The idea that business and politics are separate is a political statement that has caught both in a destructive vicious circle

What does it mean to be pro or anti-business? The question is prompted by the stereotypical views displayed during the autumn UK political party conference season. Conservatives proclaimed a "generational struggle" for an "enterprising, business, low-tax economy that delivers prosperity for the people and generations to come"; Labour reverted to type by proposing to generate public funds through opportunistic levies on bankers' bonuses and tobacco profits.

This is more than a pity; it is an evasion of responsibility. You would not know it from UK party politics, but there is indeed a generational debate and our prosperity does depend on it. However, the answer will come neither from the Conservative offer – business as usual – given that it was business as usual that brought us the banking crash, soaring wage inequality and a shrinking corporate sector unable to provide jobs, pensions or growth, nor from Labour expediency, fudging real debate while pouncing on unpopular industries to levy one-off taxes.

It is in business that the debate is happening. In recent months the pages of Harvard Business Review, the blogosphere and, to an extent, the Financial Times, have been fizzing with arguments about maximising shareholder value and the alternatives, and for once revisionist voices are audible.

Not all the alarm is among those with most to lose and who hope to head off future Occupy movements by tinkering at the edges. Organisations in the mainstream, such as the Aspen Institute and the Drucker Society, together with ad-hoc groups such as the Purpose of the Corporation Project, are to the fore. Even a few courageous chief executives, among them Unilever's Paul Polman and Dominic Barton of McKinsey, have conceded that the

governance system relied on since the 1980s is fundamentally flawed.

As a new report from Cranfield School of Management, Combining Profit and Purpose, puts it, the "fundamental question of the purpose of business is, once again, up for grabs" after a long period when it was taboo. Current and future leaders were polled on the social purpose of business. All agreed that business should have a social purpose but, unlike their elders, few future leaders (current or recent MBA students at European business schools) thought it currently had one, a lack they attributed chiefly to "management attitudes". In general they were much more impatient about slow progress.

Given the comic-book versions of business and management adhered to in Westminster, one might be tempted to say we should keep politicians out of the debate. That would be a mistake. First, the corporation is not part of the natural order. It was devised – and can be reinvented – by human ingenuity. As Martin Wolf noted in the FT recently, almost nothing is as important as thinking through how this institution is governed. Involving as it does choices about ends, means, legitimacy, power and fairness, this goes to the heart of politics. Today's model has demonstrated the consequences of getting it wrong.

Second, in a 1990 lecture to the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) entitled "What is a company for?", Charles Handy argued it was a cop-out to exhort companies to do the right things when the rule book and short-term pressures pushed in the other direction. Many companies tried to act responsibly, he noted, but it was unreasonable to expect them "to play fair when the rules of the game allow everyone else to play rough... No wonder that they sometimes pay only lip service to the other stakeholders and pander to the short-term needs of the punters."

So the rule book needs to be changed. "We must not be slaves to our history but trustees of our destinies," Handy said. "Our companies are too precious to be lost because we have not dared to question the past, or to dream the future." That involves tough technical and, yes, political choices. But it is also a huge opportunity, with sky-high stakes. The idea that business and politics are separate is itself a political statement, one that, ironically, has caught both in a destructive vicious circle.

Business is paralysed by the trap Handy describes, while politics is prohibited from intervening by political caricature, fuelling public cynicism and disengagement. Could breaking the deadlock by engaging constructively with the real politics of organisation thus constitute the first step towards not just economic but equally needed political renewal? Ⓑ

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREW BAKER

Simon Caulkin tweets on management and economic affairs @nikluac

DEAN'S COLUMN

Fiona Devine

Straddling economics and sociology, Mark Granovetter's thinking matters as barriers in the business world break down

Business schools are inherently interdisciplinary, with scholars often spanning subjects from physics and maths to psychology and sociology. This is why business schools are strategically important both to universities, where interdisciplinarity fosters innovation, and to business itself, as the boundaries between strategy, decision sciences and marketing, for example, blur and become increasingly flexible.

As a sociologist, it has been a pleasure to reflect how the pioneering work of Mark Granovetter offers lessons for business education and its students. Granovetter is an American sociologist and professor at Stanford University who is renowned for his work on the "strength of weak ties" and the importance of social networks as sources of information and advice in getting a job.

Granovetter spotted the importance of "weak ties" in finding new information about job opportunities and careers. This often comes not from a person's family and friends (strong ties) but from those in a wider network (weak ties) who have access to other sources. Today, these might be your second or third connections on LinkedIn. This is the crux of his 1974 book, *Getting a Job*.

These ideas were expanded as Granovetter came to see economic relations between individuals and organisations – be they businesses, charities or other forms of economic organisation – as embedded in social relations. The concept of "embeddedness" is critical for recognising that economic life does not exist in an abstract economic sphere independent of social relationships.

Granovetter applied these ideas to understanding innovation networks, entrepreneurship, pricing practices, corporate governance, corruption and much more. It is a perspective that underpins economic sociology – a field pioneered by Granovetter and Swedish sociologist Richard Swedberg – giving a wider understanding of business and management.

The significance of social networks is recognised by individuals and organisations, most especially in the digital world in which we now live. The popularity of LinkedIn and Twitter is testimony to the power of weak ties, proving a powerful tool for creating and maintaining contacts and using them when doing business across the globe.

Ties that bind: the popularity of LinkedIn and Twitter is testimony to the power of the weak ties, originally highlighted by Mark Granovetter

Universities and deans certainly appreciate the role of alumni in business education. Students gain much from hearing alumni talk about setting up their own businesses, securing funding, surviving setbacks and so on, as well as offering internship opportunities and employment upon graduation.

The importance of social ties and networks in the information age as well as our capacity to create more information by analysing big data cannot be denied. We find ourselves awash with information and various forms of data that can inform decision making. The amount of information at our fingertips can inhibit decisiveness, however, if we cannot see the wood for the trees.

Decision making often requires us to digest information efficiently and effectively and this can require shortcuts. Advice and guidance provided by trusted colleagues in our social networks are crucial. For instance, I have examined how parents look beyond official information and draw on social networks when choosing schools for their children.

Granovetter's insights can be applied in many ways in a world that is very different to the one in which he was first thinking and writing in the early 1970s.

It is the interdisciplinary nature of his ideas – straddling sociology and economics – that proved so innovative. This is what business schools are so good at, in both research and teaching. They are pivotal to universities – collaborating with colleagues in other areas such as physical and engineering sciences and human and medical sciences.

These insights into economic relations are hugely practical as we see the boundaries of activities in the business world break down and become more porous and flexible in the pursuit of sustainable growth and success.

Fiona Devine is head of Manchester Business School

PHOTO: DIMITRI VERVITSIOTIS/GETTY IMAGES

Journey plan

Steve Allen has seen through huge changes as finance chief of Transport for London but a course at Insead gave him new insights into leadership

BY GILL PLIMMER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE BIBBY

Grand scale:
Steve Allen, here at Westminster Tube station, has overseen structural changes

INTERVIEW

As head of finance at one of the world's most congested travel networks, Steve Allen could be expected to have a head for numbers.

At Transport for London (TfL), Allen, 48, is responsible for counting the costs of a £9bn annual budget that covers 27m journeys a day, including 4.2m on the underground and 6.5m on buses, as well as the expense of 580km of roads.

But the Oxford University maths graduate's journey to a prestigious position running the UK capital's transport system has been anything but formulaic.

Raised by a print worker and a midwife in the Yorkshire seaside town of Bridlington, Allen was the first in his family to go to university and initially felt daunted by his peers at Oxford, who included Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, and prime minister David Cameron. Although he works with the mayor now, at university Allen couldn't afford to join the union club and the two "moved in different circles".

"I felt socially out of my depth at Oxford," Allen says. "I don't think I'd ever met anyone who had been to public school. I did feel like a country bumpkin."

He cites as an example being told to reply to letters in the third person – "Allen would like to go to dinner," he says, highlighting the stiff formality that lingered at Oxford during the 1980s. He was also told which knife and fork to use – as "we only used one of each at our house", he adds.

Despite a successful career that has included stints at Schroders, the merchant bank, and the UK government's transport department, Allen describes himself as at the "introvert end of the spectrum".

A three-month advanced management course last year at Insead, the French business school, included practical management advice and self-development, but it was the latter elements of the course that seem to have struck a chord.

One of the key findings during a 360-degree appraisal ahead of the Insead course was that colleagues had little knowledge of who he was outside work. He has made an effort to "open up a bit more" and go out for drinks more often because "there are always challenging conversations to have and it helps if you have a broader relationship."

Allen is due to get married this month to his partner, an NHS manager, whom he met on a holiday to Cambodia 12 years ago. Although most people close to him have met his future husband, being gay is not something he has "shouted from the rooftop", although he says this is less because of discrimination and more down to an inherent shyness.

Nevertheless, Allen acknowledges there has been a huge "generational shift" in the acceptance of gay culture, even in the past few years, and that visibility remains important in the business world.

Insead emphasises diversity, limiting the number of people on each course according to their country of origin and industry. With the tranquility of Fontainebleau forest on the doorstep of the Insead campus, Allen says the course was useful as a means of standing back and reassessing priorities. "It's time to stop and unpack and think what you're doing personally and for the organisation. At Insead they look at all aspects of your development," he says.

Although some parts of this didn't appeal, not least the piece on Jungian psychological theory, there were others that made an impact, including the sessions on decision making, based around Daniel Kahneman's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, which helps people understand how they make judgments.

"If you think something is really annoying, it's because it really challenges a deeply held belief," he says. "It's about understanding how the mind works."

Other lessons included the "seemingly obvious" idea that if a leader is hosting a group discussion on new directions, he shouldn't lead with his own ideas. "Otherwise people will just follow suit," he adds.

Allen may have learnt from the course, but the impressive view from the corner office at TfL's headquarters, between Victoria Station and the Houses of Parliament, is testimony to his own success at driving change in the organisation.

Since being promoted to managing director of finance in 2007, he has helped TfL take over Metronet and Tubelines, the London Underground infrastructure companies, bringing the maintenance work in house. He has also restructured Croydon Tramlink, the two Docklands Light Railway private finance initiative (PFI) projects to City airport and Woolwich, and helped bring the Oyster ticketing back under TfL control.

This may seem slightly at odds with Allen's role at the then Department of Transport in the early 1990s, when as part of the fast-track programme for

Biography

1985-1988 Queen's College, University of Oxford, MA in mathematics.
1988-1991 University of Edinburgh, PhD in pure mathematics.
1991 Department of Transport. Several roles, including private secretary to the secretary of state.
1996 Citigroup, vice-president, project finance.
2001 Abbey National Treasury Services, head of rail infrastructure. group. **2003-present** Transport for London, joined as director of corporate finance in 2003; appointed managing director, finance in 2007.

'If you think something is really annoying, it's because it really challenges a deeply held belief. It's about understanding how the mind works'

Thinking fast and slow: Steve Allen has found his decision making has benefited from insights gained at Insead

civil servants he was involved in advising on the flotation of Railtrack, the owner of the rail infrastructure, and in the creation of rolling stock companies.

He also worked at Schroders, Abbey National and Citigroup on project finance, including controversial PFI schemes for hospitals, alongside City grandees such as Sir Win Bischoff, the veteran of City finance and former chairman of Lloyds banking group.

Asked if he sees any contradiction between working on early PFIs and helping London Underground escape them, Allen says he "didn't design the schemes". "I'd like to think that if I had been involved on the client side, I would have advised London Underground to do things differently," he says.

More recently Allen approved a deal to allow the Hong Kong rail operator MTR to run the new trans-London Crossrail system when it opens in 2016. He says the decision was made to outsource the management, rather than keep it in house, to avoid the tight labour conditions demanded by unions on much of the rest of the TfL network.

On the difference between working in the public sector and the City in the 1990s, Allen says the latter was "much more financially driven. People focused on what they get paid and bonuses." "It was very sexist," he adds. "People would talk about who had the prettiest secretary."

'People think in narratives. If you are trying to change an organisation, you can help drive that change by providing that narrative'

Allen says that, instead, his natural style towards the 28,000 employees of TfL is more "collaborative" rather than "telling people what to do".

As he embarks on a programme to cut costs and maximise revenues from commercial sources – such as a herb garden that supplies London restaurants from a disused underground station near Clapham – he says he will be trying to use one last lesson from Insead to help staff cope with change.

"People think in narratives. If you are trying to change an organisation, you can help drive that change by providing that narrative," he says. B

Dear Lucy...

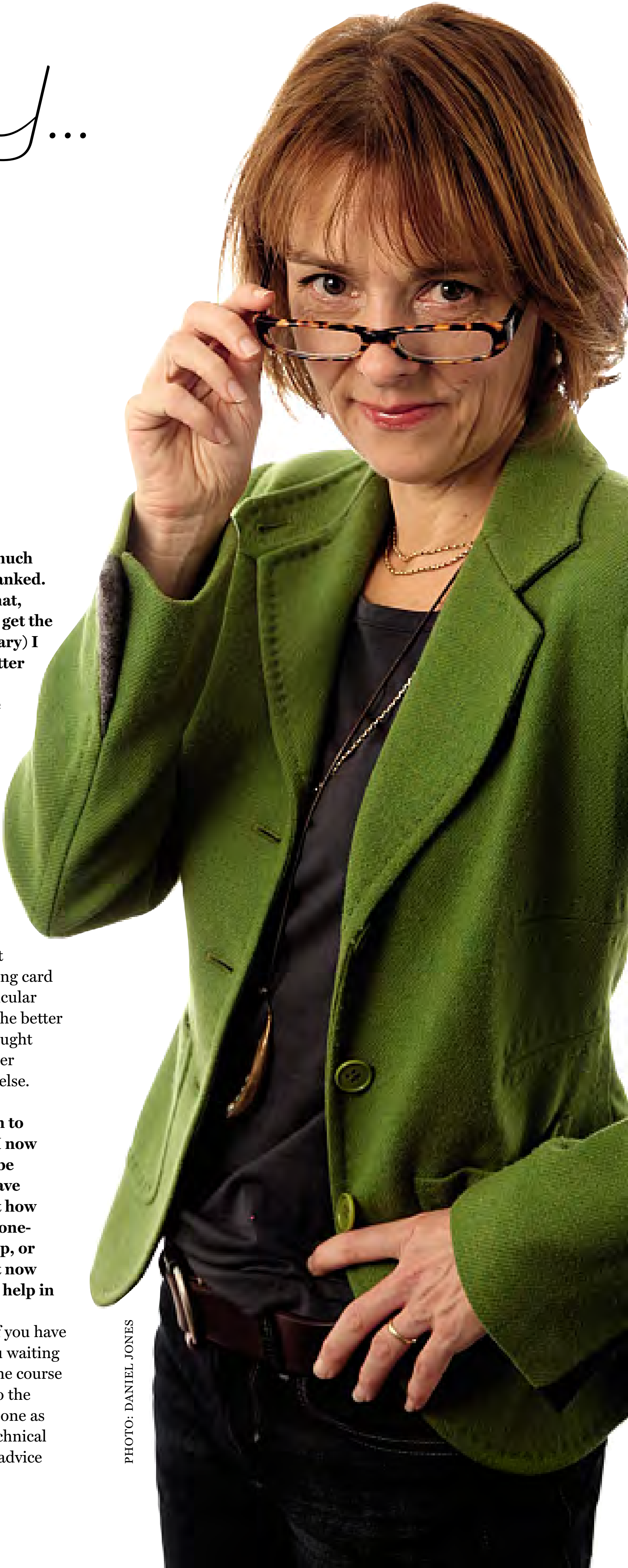


PHOTO: DANIEL JONES

By Lucy Kellaway

I am a non-European at a European business school. In feedback I have been told I lack soft skills and need to be more appreciative of cultural nuances. However, I am top of my class in corporate finance, data analysis and models, and I am also considering two job offers. This lack of soft skills does not seem to have held me back so far and I'm not sure I see the point. Am I missing something?
Yes. You are missing something enormous. Even if you want to be a boffin who deals only with numbers, you still have to learn to get on with other people. You talk about "soft skills" in a dismissive way, as if they were self-evidently less important than the hard ones. That might be true when you are starting out, but in the long run the reverse is true.

Many people can master the numbers, but to be able to do that and know how to deal with the whims and mood swings of your clients and colleagues takes dedication and application – that is what sorts out those who make it to the top from those who don't.

You say that lack of soft skills hasn't held you back so far. Well, of course it hasn't as you have not even started your new job. I suggest you learn everything you can about different cultural practices. Then you will reduce the chances of rubbing people up the wrong way. No one wants to work with such a person, no matter how good they are at data analysis.

I have received offers of an MBA place at two European schools. One is ranked very highly and is very expensive. The other is much cheaper but is not so highly ranked. Since there is no guarantee that, whatever school I go to, I will get the consultancy job (and high salary) I am aiming for, would it be better to go for the cheaper MBA?
No. So long as you can scrabble the money together it is better to go for the school that everyone has heard of. You are right that there is no guarantee that you will land the consulting job of your dreams, but at least that firm is likely to come to the better school on a hiring drive.

An MBA is as much a calling card as a set of skills, so it is generally a wise investment to get the most prestigious calling card you can afford. And if this particular consultant turns you down, at the better school your money will have bought you a better network and a better springboard to find something else.

My aim in life has always been to set up my own business, and I now have an idea that I think will be very successful. However, I have very limited knowledge about how to set up a business. Would a one-year European-style MBA help, or would it be better to just start now and study online when I need help in particular areas?
If I were you I'd just go for it. If you have a really great idea, what are you waiting for? I wouldn't even do an online course – I would throw everything into the business, possibly finding someone as a partner who gets the more technical stuff. You will learn by seeking advice

from everyone you know who might be even halfway useful. And you will learn from the mistakes that you will inevitably make.

The one thing most new businesses are short of is cash, so I can't see that it makes any sense at all to saddle yourself with the debts that come with an MBA. There is time for that later, if things don't go your way. If your company fails – as most small businesses do, with or without an MBA – then is the time to start thinking about spending a year at business school to help you decide what to do next.

If you spread yourself too thinly on a multi-campus programme you never build up the networks that are half the point of getting an MBA

I am planning to study for an MBA and have narrowed my selection of schools down to one in France and one in Spain. I prefer the Spanish school, but my boyfriend is French and is very keen that I study in France. I value our relationship and don't want to upset him, but I am beginning to feel emotionally blackmailed. What should I do?
Tell your boyfriend that we live in the age of the railway and the plane and the motor car, and that France and Spain are neighbours. Tell him that we live in a connected age. If he is in France and you in Spain he can talk to you as many times a day as he wants on FaceTime and Skype. Above all, tell him to get off your case.

This is your career and your education and it's up to you to do what is best for you. If he can't understand that, you might consider telling him that he isn't the boyfriend for you.

I am deciding between one-year MBA programmes. Will a multi-campus experience stand me in better stead than studying at only one campus, or will I just end up exhausted?
I feel exhausted just thinking about the multi-campus experience. If you can't find a single campus where you want to study, maybe you shouldn't be doing this at all. Also, if you spread yourself too thinly you never build up the networks that are half the point of getting an MBA. So no, I wouldn't dream of it.

My father is a management consultant and has helped me with ideas and solutions to some class assignments. My class has been told to form small teams to tackle a project. Everyone wants me on their team. I don't mind people thinking I am a genius, but I am afraid that I may be rumbled. What should I do?
Don't even think of letting on. There is no reason why you shouldn't hold your head high – there is nothing to be ashamed of in recycling ideas from other people. Even geniuses do that up to a point. The only problem is if your father is so overbearing that you can't think at all without him breathing down your neck. But I bet that's not the case. You wouldn't have got into the school if it were. In my darker hours I wonder what management consultants are really for. Now I know the answer: they help their offspring succeed at business school. Ⓑ

Analysis, p22
What the 2014 surveys reveal

Rankings, p24-27
Full tables of the top schools

Methodology, p27
How the tables were compiled

rankings

European business schools 2014

The top schools and how they compare

ILLUSTRATION: ADRIAN JOHNSON

LBS finds missing piece

UK school regains top spot. By Laurent Ortmans

London Business School is top of the 2014 FT ranking of European business schools, regaining the position it last held in 2005. LBS pushed the 2013 joint winners HEC Paris and Spain's IE Business School into second and third places respectively.

LBS tops the ranking of the best 81 business schools in Europe based on the schools' performance in four of the rankings published by the FT each year: MBA, executive MBA (EMBA), masters in management (MiM) and executive education. (Two schools tied for 80th position with identical scores.)

The ranking measures the quality and breadth of the schools' postgraduate programmes. Schools must take part in all four rankings to be eligible for a full score. LBS rose from third last year by participating in all four rankings for the first time.

The London school's MBA is ranked first in Europe, its EMBA programme, delivered jointly with Columbia Business School in the US, is ranked third and its MiM programme is in the top 10 on its first participation. The MiM ranking was the last missing piece for LBS to come first in Europe.

LBS's programmes consistently rank highly for the extent to which alumni reach their targets. "I managed to achieve not only the goals I set for myself but to exceed them with the job I secured," says one 2010 MBA graduate who responded to the FT survey.

HEC Paris is second despite outperforming LBS in all rankings but the MBA. It missed out on a full house because of its participation in the executive MBA ranking as one-third of Trium, the programme delivered jointly with London School of Economics and New York's Stern School of Business. (Schools participating in the EMBA ranking with joint programmes receive a proportionate score.)

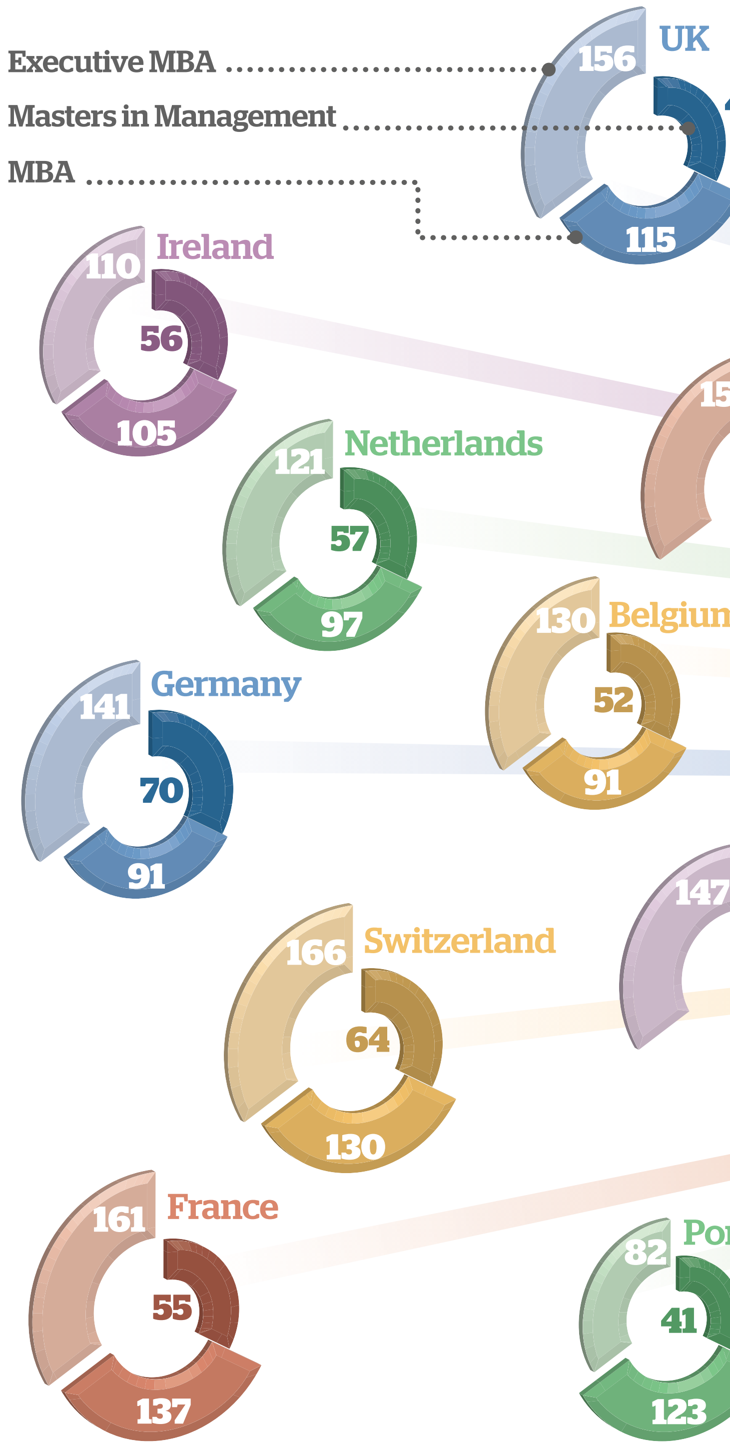
Only nine further schools participated in all four rankings. They are ranked between third place (IE Business School) and 38th (Politecnico di Milano School of Management).

Judge Business School at Cambridge University in the UK was the biggest riser, climbing 19 places to 29th thanks to a strong performance in the executive

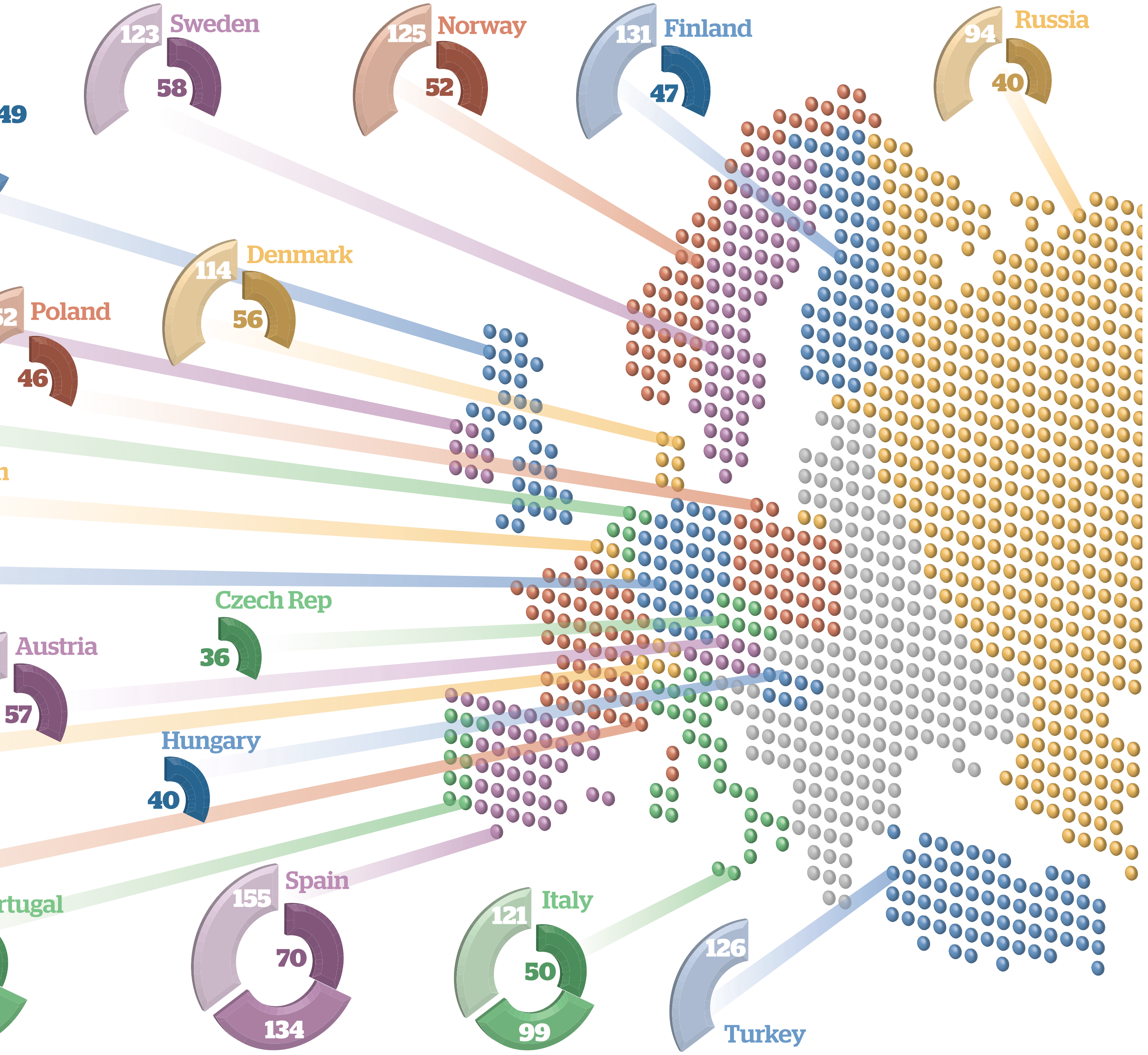
Alumni consistently rate London Business School programmes highly for the degree to which they have achieved their goals

Alumni salaries ($'000s)*

2011 graduates by country of study



Footnote
* Adjusted for purchasing power parity (see methodology, p27).
Source: FT data.



MBA ranking in its first participation in that list. Warwick Business School made a comeback to the top 20 (19) after missing out on the MiM ranking in 2013.

The UK and France are the two powerhouses of business education in Europe. Nearly half of the schools listed are from either the UK (20) or France (19). French MiMs outperform UK programmes in terms of ranking, salary ($55,000 versus $49,000) and student numbers (9,000 versus 1,200). However, UK MBAs outdo French programmes in terms of numbers (18 schools in this ranking versus five) and student numbers (1,900 versus 1,300) though not in terms of salary ($115,000 versus $137,000).

Across all European schools, the average salary of alumni three years after graduation ranges from $143,000 for executive MBA graduates to $54,000 for MiM graduates. MBA graduates earned on average $123,000. Spanish and German MiM graduates enjoyed the highest salary three years after graduation, both $70,000 on average. French MBA graduates and Swiss EMBA graduates top their salary scale, with average salaries of $137,000 and $166,000 respectively.

Télécom Business School in France and Prague's University of Economics have the most gender-balanced faculty, with exactly 50 per cent women, while Switzerland's University of Zurich is the least balanced, with only 9 per cent. Switzerland's IMD has the most international faculty, with 94 per cent of them from overseas, while faculty at Politecnico di Milano School of Management are all Italian. Ⓑ

GRAPHIC: RUSSELL BIRKETT, LAURENT ORTMANS

Top MBA: London Business School
London Business School, which tops the 2014 European business school rankings, has also been the top European business school in the Global MBA ranking for 10 years.

But it is the school's one-year masters in management for "pre-experience" students, rather than its two-year MBA, that has catapulted the school to the top of the table.

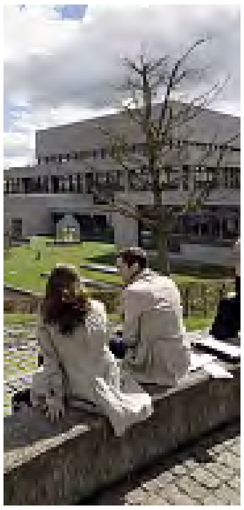
Launched in 2010, the MiM was eligible for the ranking of these degrees for the first time this year. LBS's programme entered the ranking at number 10 in the world. Because the European ranking allocates 25 per cent of its points to the quality of schools' MiMs, this ensured LBS took the crown as the top business school in Europe. – **Della Bradshaw**

Top EMBA: HEC Paris
HEC Paris topped the 2014 executive MBA ranking as part of the Trium programme. This three-way partnership with NYU Stern, which specialises in finance, and the London School of Economics, strong in economics and political science, draws on HEC's expertise in general management and high-level executive training.

The intake of 85 students, who study in London, Paris and New York, is the most senior group in the FT rankings, and achieves a significant increase on already very high salaries compared with other EMBA cohorts. HEC's EMBA has been among the top three European programmes since joining the FT ranking in 2006, but this is the first time since 2011 it has held the number one slot. – **Jonathan Moules**

FT EUROPEAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS 2014
The top schools (continued overleaf)

						MBA 2014			EMBA 2014 #	
2014	2013	2012	3-year average	Business school	Country	European rank	Salary today ($)	Salary increase (%)	European rank	Salary today ($)
1	3	3	2	London Business School	UK	1	156,553	107	13 (3)***	172,028 (252,539)
2	1	2	2	HEC Paris	France	7	120,016	104	1**	307,003
3	1	1	2	IE Business School	Spain	5	146,933	112	6	198,402
4	3	5	4	Esade Business School	Spain	8	120,718	120	11**	217,870
5	5	4	5	Insead	France	2	148,183	87	4 (2)***	186,211 (304,843)
6	7	7	7	University of St Gallen	Switzerland	24	102,158	65	23	147,240
7	6	6	6	Iese Business School	Spain	3	143,168	125	5	218,434
8	8	11	9	SDA Bocconi/Università Bocconi	Italy	11	112,901	112	30	133,796
9	9	7	8	IMD	Switzerland	4	142,446	72	7	246,395
10	12	12	11	University of Oxford: Saïd	UK	9	133,315	91	10	205,942
11	10	9	10	Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University	Netherlands	12	98,771	94	27 (17)***	118,828 (167,987)
12	11	10	11	ESCP Europe	France/UK/Germany/Spain/Italy				8	155,087
13	16	18	16	Imperial College Business School	UK	16	103,604	68	17	139,343
14	13	15	14	EMLyon Business School	France	27	93,356	62	38	102,598
15	14	19	16	Essec Business School	France				21**	131,037
16	15	14	15	Vlerick Business School	Belgium	29	90,831	66	36	115,946
17	17	25	20	Edhec Business School	France	35*	78,976	48	46*	96,344
18	23	36	26	Mannheim Business School	Germany	19	97,962	73	21**	131,037
19=	18	16	18	City University: Cass	UK	13	110,260	76	19	148,970
19=	31	13	21	Warwick Business School	UK	10	119,121	87	9	148,680
21	28	23	24	ESMT - European School of Management and Technology	Germany	25	89,172	60	15	150,498
22	19	16	19	Cranfield School of Management	UK	15	120,941	75	32	125,718
23	20	26	23	Tias Business School	Netherlands	21	89,848	84	43	105,380
24	25	23	24	Eada Business School Barcelona	Spain	37*	78,868	65	48*	86,374
25	25	32	27	Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics	Portugal	17**	123,062	82	50*/**	87,002
26=	21	20	22	Stockholm School of Economics	Sweden				42	122,917
26=	27	21	25	Grenoble Graduate School of Business	France				30	100,506
28	36	29	31	Nova School of Business and Economics	Portugal	17**	123,062	82	50*/**	87,002
29=	29	21	26	Aalto University	Finland				37	130,963
29=	48	49	42	University of Cambridge: Judge	UK	6	144,350	92	16	192,834
29=	32	-	-	Kedge Business School	France				14	171,052
32=	29	33	31	University of Strathclyde Business School	UK	20	95,716	81	29	121,422
32=	23	44	33	HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management	Germany	36*	81,769	50	35	109,963
34	21	-	-	WHU Beisheim	Germany				11**	176,998
35	34	33	34	University College Dublin: Smurfit	Ireland	26	105,384	63	41	109,697
36	53	29	39	Henley Business School	UK				24	135,082
37	39	47	41	Manchester Business School	UK	14	106,535	96		
38=	38	38	38	Politecnico di Milano School of Management	Italy	39*	67,192	68	53*	99,170
38=	46	44	43	NHH	Norway				49*	77,978
38=	44	62	48	BI Norwegian Business School	Norway				45* (25)***	123,059 (151,576)



Top masters in management: St Gallen

Small is beautiful, it is said. The University of St Gallen, one of the smallest in Europe, has dominated the FT's MiM ranking for four years. Its MA in strategy and international management is also one of the smallest programmes ranked by the FT, with about 40 graduates a year.

More than 90 per cent of participants are non-Swiss and were ranked top for international mobility by country of employment between graduation and their job three years later. The MiM was ranked fourth for international course experience.

St Gallen is one of only 10 schools to feature in the four major rankings published by the FT each year. It is ranked sixth in Europe in 2014, its best position so far. - Laurent Ortmans

	Masters in Management 2014†		Executive Education 2014		Faculty ‡			
Salary increase (%)	European rank	Salary today ($)	Open programmes	Custom programmes	Female faculty (%)	International faculty (%)	Faculty with doctorate (%)	Rank 2014
47 (71)	9	70,414	7	6	24	86	100	1
60	2	78,825	2	1	22	65	100	2
50	8	74,263	15	9	35	56	97	3
54	5	65,647	5	4	31	35	92	4
58 (65)			3	12	15	90	96	5
47	1	79,572	11	18	11	77	100	6
51			4	2	18	58	100	7
52	11	63,986	12	7	37	27	89	8
46			1	3	14	94	100	9
55			8	13	17	59	98	10
44 (54)	7	67,696		31	23	43	100	11
70	6	65,404	19	22	36	67	95	12
59	16	54,031		23	30	90	100	13
29	17	54,771	23	17	33	50	95	14
45	3	77,451	6	14	30	51	98	15
56	33	57,768	16	16	29	24	90	16
23	14	56,651	21	11	32	38	86	17
45	15	78,088		8	36	19	85	18
60	21	53,734		37*	30	80	96	19
94	28	58,963			35	77	100	19
55			9	20	27	82	100	21
42			10	5	25	52	92	22
44	46	47,918	29	29	25	42	90	23
46	26	54,290	26	28	32	48	61	24
39	44	39,062	18	24	33	40	98	25
42	30	58,410	17	15	23	31	96	26
72	13	56,048	27	33	43	44	80	26
39	43	42,562	28	32	44	29	100	28
46	42	51,529	24	21	35	17	94	29
54					12	69	96	29
112	39	46,708	31	38*	23	40	91	29
70	40	41,790			36	32	80	32
63	10	85,238			18	23	100	32
57	4	93,948			19	21	100	34
46	41	56,042			30	46	100	35
60			12	19	41	47	84	36
	49	45,067		25	34	33	88	37
42	57	41,946	33*	27	25	0	60	38
40	54	52,392	20	30	24	26	93	38
37 (85)	60	50,998	32	35	25	30	70	38

RANKINGS

Key to the 2014 rankings

Weights for ranking criteria are shown in brackets as a percentage.

MBA (25)

European rank: position among European schools that took part in the 2014 FT global MBA ranking.

Salary today $: average alumni salary three years after graduation, US$ by purchasing power parity (PPP). Includes weighted data from the current and two previous years, where available.

Salary increase: percentage increase in average alumni salary pre-MBA to today, three years after graduation. Includes weighted data from the current and two previous years, where available.

EMBA (25)

European rank: Position among European schools that took part in the 2014 EMBA ranking**.**

Salary today $: average three years after graduation, US$ PPP. Includes weighted data from the current and two previous years, where available.

Salary increase: percentage increase in average alumni salary pre-EMBA to today, three years after graduation. Includes weighted data from this and two previous years, where available.

Masters in Management (25)

European rank: position among European schools that participated in 2014 FT MiM ranking.

Salary today $: average salary three years after graduation, US$ PPP. Includes weighted data from the current and two previous years, where available.

Executive Education

Open programmes (12.5): Position among European schools that participated the FT ranking of open-enrolment programmes in 2014.

Custom programmes (12.5): Position among European schools that participated the FT ranking of customised programmes in 2014.

Faculty

Female faculty: percentage of women.

International faculty: percentage whose citizenship differs from country of employment.

Faculty with doctorates: percentage of full-time faculty with a doctoral degree.

Footnote

†The Cems programme was ranked fifth in the Masters in Management 2014 rankings, but it is not included here as it is a programme not a school. ‡ Data are provided for information only. Most recently published data are given. # Figure in brackets refers to data from second programme for schools with more than one ranked. *School was not included in the published 2014 ranking for this survey. **School participated in this ranking on the basis of a joint programme only. Underlying score based on proportion of total score. ***School participated with more than one programme in this ranking. Underlying score based on combined scores. The line breaks denote the pattern of clustering among the schools. Around 195 points separate London Business School at the top from the school ranked 80th. The top 11 business schools from LBS to Rotterdam School of Management, form the top group. The second group is headed by ESCP Europe, about 85 points above Leeds University Business School at the bottom of this group. The third group is headed by Iéseg School of Management.

PHOTO: DANIEL LYNCH

Highest entrant: EBS

Joining the ranking in joint 47th place, Germany's EBS Business School is the highest of four entrants, ahead of ESC La Rochelle in France, Hanken School of Economics in Finland and the University of Liverpool Management School.

EBS's masters in management is ranked 12th in Europe. The programme scores highly for the average salary of alumni three years after graduation. EBS students who graduated in 2011 reported the third-highest average salaries in Europe, at about $82,000. The school only recently joined the FT ranking, having received Equis accreditation in April 2012 – with AACSB one of the two accreditations recognised for entry to the ranking. – **Laurent Ortmans**

Top for international faculty: IMD

IMD in Switzerland has the most international faculty, 94 per cent of whom are from outside Switzerland.

Ranked ninth overall, IMD is broadening its reach with the launch in 2015 of a joint EMBA programme with Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business in China. IMD also takes the top spot for the third consecutive year in the FT's ranking of open-enrolment executive education programmes – courses that are open to managers from all organisations. The school was established in 1990 by the merger of two business schools founded by Alcan Aluminium and Nestlé: IMI in Geneva and Imede in Lausanne. – **Wai Kwen Chan**

FT EUROPEAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS 2014
The top schools (continued)

2014	2013	2012	3-year average	Business school	Country	MBA 2014 European rank	MBA 2014 Salary today ($)	MBA 2014 Salary increase (%)	EMBA 2014 # European rank	EMBA 2014 # Salary today ($)
41	37	37	38	Kozminski University	Poland				20	151,910
42=	41	40	41	Antwerp Management School	Belgium/Russia				26	147,777
42=	42	40	41	WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)	Austria				28**	147,252
44	43	42	43	HEC Lausanne	Switzerland				40	109,492
45	34	39	39	Copenhagen Business School	Denmark				38	113,712
46	45	28	40	Ashridge	UK					
47=	40	33	40	Nyenrode Business Universiteit	Netherlands					
47=	49	46	47	Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management	Belgium					
47=	55	49	50	Lancaster University Management School	UK	22	89,009	86		
47=	50	74	57	University of Bath School of Management	UK	23	92,676	55		
47=	65	-	-	Neoma Business School	France	38*	64,400	64		
47=	-	-	-	EBS Business School	Germany					
53	52	55	53	Durham University Business School	UK	28	86,887	55		
54	56	63	58	Leeds University Business School	UK	30*	86,091	79		
55	58	-	-	Iéseg School of Management	France					
56=	57	53	55	Skema Business School	France					
56=	63	-	-	ESC Rennes	France					
58	50	42	50	Bradford University School of Management	UK	34*	70,982	97		
59	66	55	60	Porto Business School	Portugal				52*	78,047
60	60	63	61	Télécom Business School	France					
61	74	-	-	St Petersburg State University GSM	Russia				47*	93,814
62	60	55	59	Audencia Nantes	France					
63	58	53	58	Toulouse Business School	France					
64	63	68	65	ESC Montpellier	France					
65	67	61	64	Maastricht University School of Business and Economics	Netherlands					
66	60	59	62	Louvain School of Management	Belgium					
67=	68	72	69	University of Zurich	Switzerland				33	125,011
67=	-	66	-	Koç University Graduate School of Business	Turkey				34	131,406
69=	47	48	55	Aston Business School	UK	31*	82,184	75		
69=	69	72	70	Birmingham Business School	UK	31*	86,521	72		
71	54	51	59	University of Edinburgh Business School	UK	33*	91,335	65		
72	71	70	71	ICN Business School	France					
73	-	77	-	Sabanci University School of Management	Turkey				44	117,986
74	71	67	71	University of Cologne, Faculty of Management	Germany					
75	69	63	69	IAE Aix-en-Provence, Aix-Marseille University GSM	France					
76	-	-	-	ESC La Rochelle	France					
77=	75	78	77	University of Economics, Prague	Czech Republic					
77=	-	76	-	Warsaw School of Economics	Poland					
79	-	79	-	Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary					
80=	-	-	-	Hanken School of Economics	Finland					
80=	-	-	-	University of Liverpool Management School	UK	40*	57,807	33		

Top for female faculty: St Petersburg
With 52 per cent female faculty, St Petersburg State University Graduate School of Management in Russia has the highest proportion of women. (The University of Zurich and the University of St Gallen in Switzerland have the lowest percentage of women at ranked schools at 9 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.)

The school says its faculty is its main asset and the development of international staff and research are priority issues. Its research centres include the Centre for Entrepreneurship and the Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (in co-operation with PwC). St Petersburg is the only Russian school in the ranking. At 61st overall, it is up 10 places since last year. – Charlotte Clarke

	Masters in Management 2014†		Executive Education 2014		Faculty ‡			
Salary increase (%)	European rank	Salary today ($)	Open programmes	Custom programmes	Female faculty (%)	International faculty (%)	Faculty with doctorate (%)	Rank 2014
84	32	56,621			34	22	88	41
51	31	45,076			31	28	85	42
30	19	56,839			35	21	95	42
18	23	54,718			27	81	100	44
34	34	56,470			33	39	92	45
			14	10	37	48	29	46
	59	54,861	22	34	20	25	61	47
	36	52,766	25		17	38	98	47
	56	40,507			30	46	88	47
	52	36,900			33	63	99	47
	37	49,162			48	43	75	47
	12	81,734			16	26	100	47
	51	46,817			36	64	93	53
	55	37,185			40	43	82	54
	18	48,639			40	81	98	55
	25	48,971		36	44	38	76	56
	20	49,162			36	84	81	56
	53	40,785			41	29	82	58
31			30	26	30	9	82	59
	22	50,633			50	50	76	60
49	50	40,025			52	2	92	61
	24	55,174			41	40	81	62
	27	49,381			40	41	92	63
	29	44,295			46	42	94	64
	34	56,871			17	51	97	65
	37	49,329			33	23	100	66
24					9	85	100	67
51					45	42	94	67
					31	46	82	69
					30	44	80	69
					34	52	91	71
	45	44,041			41	44	78	72
39					43	27	100	73
	47	65,463			19	6	85	74
	48	47,562			40	19	88	75
	58	39,770			41	31	71	76
	62	36,177			50	9	71	77
	61	38,260			44	1	95	77
	63	39,640			43	9	80	79
	64*	42,094			38	20	93	80
					32	37	84	80

Methodology

The 11th annual Financial Times ranking of European business schools is based on the combined performance of Europe's leading schools across the main rankings published by the FT in 2014: MBA, executive MBA, masters in management and non-degree executive education programmes. The online MBA and masters in finance rankings are not included.

A European rank is produced for each type of programme. Schools are awarded an indexed score, relative to the performance of their programme compared with all European programmes in that ranking.

The schools' performances in the MBA, EMBA and MiM rankings account for 25 per cent each. For executive education, the scores obtained for customised and open programmes both account for 12.5 per cent.

Indexed scores awarded for each ranking are added together, according to the weighting outlined above, creating a combined total for each school. This score is divided by the number of rankings in which a school features to calculate an average score – a derived measure of quality. This is added to the combined total score to generate each school's final score by which the schools are ranked.

The ranking is a measure of the schools' quality and breadth of programmes. Only schools that participated in all five rankings are eligible for a full score. A school that took part in one ranking only is eligible for one-quarter of the total score, and so on.

Scores are not simply based on aggregation of published ranking positions. They are calculated using Z-scores – formulae that reflect the range between the top and bottom school – for the individual criteria that compose each component ranking.

The following rules are specific to the FT composite European ranking:

• Programmes that were ranked outside the published table (outside the top 100 MBA programmes, for example) are taken into consideration. They are those shown in the table with an asterisk;

• Schools ranked with a joint programme receive a proportional share of the programme's indexed score. For example, Rotterdam received 25 per cent of the score achieved by its joint EMBA programme delivered with three other schools;

• If a school is ranked more than once in the same ranking, a combined weighted score is awarded. For example, Rotterdam received 75 per cent of the score achieved by its own EMBA programme (having already 25 per cent of the score achieved by its joint programme);

• Finally, schools that participated with only a joint programme in one ranking only are not eligible to feature.

Judith Pizer of Jeff Head Associates acted as the FT's database consultant.

PHOTO: NIKOLAEV/DREAMSTIME

inside

Shared ambition

Bright idea: Alexandre Grandemy and Gary Cohen, Essec alumni and founders of Deways, France's first peer-to-peer car sharing service

PHOTOS: MUSTGO/DREAMSTIME; MAGALI COROUGE

FEATURE

A maturing business

Students have found a taste for food and drink management degrees. By Ross Tieman

Ever since the global crisis, when careers in the financial sector lost some of their allure, business students have been developing an appetite for industries that satisfy some of life's more basic needs. Across Europe, schools that offer specialist courses in food and drink management are extending their scope and increasing their intakes as demand rises.

Inseec, a multi-centre business school with roots in Bordeaux in France, is planning wine marketing courses in Mandarin at universities in Beijing and Shanghai, seeking a partner in California and opening an offshoot in Beaune, in the eastern French wine region of Burgundy.

That throws down the gauntlet to Burgundy School of Business in Dijon, which has been training the region's wine trade managers for a century and launched its School of Wine & Spirits Business in September 2013.

Meanwhile, the UK's venerable Royal Agricultural University (RAU) in Gloucestershire, which offers two specialist food industry MBAs, aims to grow from 1,200 to more than 2,000 students within five years.

Jean-François Ley, director of Inseec's wines and spirits division, says the drinks industry offers fascinating management challenges: despite annual wine revenues of $170bn and another $300bn from spirits, and its global scope, the industry is highly fragmented.

"The biggest spirits player commands only 2 per cent of the market," says Ley. "The need to build brands and gain market insights is crucial. In this industry marketing *is* the management process."

Inseec offers undergraduate training in wines and spirits management, as well as an MBA in wine marketing and management, an MBA in spirits marketing and management and a luxury brand management MBA with a focus on food and wine. The one-year wine MBA has more than 80 participants a year and the spirits course about 30. Both are taught in English, partly in Bordeaux and partly in London.

Given the estimated 3m-3.5m jobs in the wine industry worldwide, with as many as 600,000 in France alone, the number of business school places seems modest. "Our graduates have no difficulty finding jobs," says Ley.

French business schools are building on historic expertise to lead management education in an industry that includes more than 60 wine-producing countries and where China now ranks fifth in the consumption league table.

Burgundy's School of Wine & Spirits Business, which has a strong emphasis on research, is the latest development in response to global demand. To complement its long-standing French-language masters in international wine and spirit trading, the school started an MSc in wine business in 2008 and an MSc in wine management in 2012. The one-year wine management MSc, which has an optional six-month internship, costs €11,480.

The number of students at Burgundy rose 30 per cent in 2014. "What I observe is increasing interest from this generation," says Jérôme Gallo, the wine school's director. He puts that down to three factors: the industry's international nature, its annual growth rate of 5 per cent and the "intimate" nature of its products, savoured by the palate but evaluated by the mind.

Graduates of Burgundy's masters programme in international wine are scattered throughout the industry, creating a network for placement of interns and graduates. Like Inseec, Burgundy is responding to strong demand for wine trade education from China, where the surge in consumption is driving rising production.

'The need to build brands and gain market insights is crucial. In this industry marketing *is* the management process'

The rise of new consuming and producing regions is also a factor behind the expansion at the RAU, says Kanes Rajah, dean of the university's School of Business and Entrepreneurship. The school offers a full-time or part-time MBA in advanced farm management as well as a one- or two-year full-time MBA in international food

PHOTO: MAGALI COROUGE

Tempting choices: Jean-François Ley of Inseec says a fragmented market offers opportunities

MBA BLOGS
What is it like to be an MBA student? Read our MBA bloggers at: ft.com/mba-blog

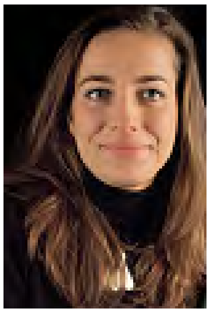
Bringing home the bacon: RAU students, above, and Ludovica Leone of Bologna Business School, below

and agribusiness and a part-time MBA in business management in the food industries, that can be spread over two, three or four years.

Prof Rajah says an MBA is not excessive for someone running a farm, because the nature of the food chain is changing dramatically. Markets have become global and farms are bigger. Large-scale industrial farmers take multimillion-dollar decisions every month about production strategies that are vulnerable to weather or political risk. Technology and trade are transforming farming and food manufacturing: digital devices, for example, measure the fertility of European cows fed on Brazilian soybeans.

A college, then, that once trained the offspring of British farmers has become a university where students from diverse backgrounds and places such as Indonesia, Malaysia, China, continental Europe and Africa rub shoulders as they learn how to feed the world.

Many don't go back to the farms they came from, says Prof Rajah, but 96-97



per cent are employed immediately on graduation – not surprising, perhaps, as while agriculture may account for just 1 per cent of gross domestic product in the UK, the figure is 10-15 per cent in many countries.

But globalisation has also opened up world markets to what were once regional specialities. Bologna Business School in Italy has a tradition of training managers for the country's food industry. Four years ago, drawing on local expertise in producing and marketing Parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar and salami, it introduced a food and

Technology and trade are transforming farming: digital devices measure the fertility of European cows fed on Brazilian soybeans

drink track in its MBA. Today that is undertaken by about 15 of the 70-strong cohort and attracts participants from as far afield as Latin America, Asia and Africa. Ludovica Leone, director of the food and wine track, says about half are mature managers from the industry, while the others are typically switching career to pursue a passion, often to launch a business of their own.

SDA Bocconi School of Management in Milan also capitalises on Italian skills to offer a one-year master of management in food and beverage, catering to the hospitality and retail industries. Essec Business School offers a masters in international food industry management in Paris and Singapore, and France-based Kedge Business School offers an executive MBA with a major in wine and spirits management.

It seems likely that with growing interest in food and drink courses, an increasing number of business school graduates will be spending at least part of their working lives in muddy boots or perhaps plying a corkscrew. Ⓑ

Meet the Dean

Fresh start

VIDEO
Lars Strannegård in conversation with Della Bradshaw. www.ft.com/bized-video

Lars Strannegård
Stockholm School of Economics
By Della Bradshaw

On one level Lars Strannegård is a predictable choice for president of the Stockholm School of Economics, a role he took on in June. On another level his appointment is impressively creative.

Though a thoroughbred Swedish academic, Prof Strannegård has an international teaching pedigree and has been a visiting scholar at Stanford University in the US and the University of St Gallen in Switzerland. And although he is a professor of business administration, he is a bit of an artist at heart.

Not only is he vice-chairman of the board of the Swedish Arts Council, he is on the board of the Bergman Estate on Fårö island, where Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman lived. He even co-founded the Röda Sten (Red Rock) art gallery, which is located on the cliffs of Gothenburg.

PHOTO: DAVID PARRY

Biography
With a PhD from Gothenburg University, Lars Strannegård taught at Stockholm School of Economics, Uppsala University and Gothenburg University before returning to SSE in 2009 as dean of the MBA programme. With visiting scholar positions at Stanford University in the US and the University of St Gallen in Switzerland also under his belt, Prof Strannegård became vice-president of SSE in 2012, and in 2013 he was additionally appointed as acting chief executive of SSE's executive education arm, IFL. Prof Strannegård became president of SSE on June 1 2014.

'The new generation want to bring change to the world – we have to teach them in a slightly different way'

What is perhaps most striking about Prof Strannegård, however, is that despite leading one of the most august business institutions in Europe – SSE was established in 1909, just a year after Harvard Business School – he is one of the most youthful deans in Europe. At just 45 years old, he is certainly the youngest president in recent memory at SSE.

What is more, at first glance he could just as easily be a designer or advertising executive as an academic. While most business professors tend towards the stuffy or the corporate, Prof Strannegård is most decidedly cool.

This combination of the traditional and the mercurial looks set to be the hallmark of his tenure as dean. His mantra is that SSE must build on its heritage but needs to be up-to-date and more international in its outlook.

"We have to change lots of things," he says. "We have to be a contemporary business school. The new generation want to bring change to the world – we have to teach them in a slightly different way."

Prof Strannegård's appointment is a clear indicator that change is afoot, following nearly a decade of difficulties at the school. Most recently SSE was without a full-time president for a year after Prof Strannegård's predecessor left after a year in the job. Prior to that, the school briefly saw its five-year accreditation from Equis, the European accreditation body, reduced to three years because of lack of clarity in the school's strategy, although SSE's five-year status has been returned.

Most controversial of all was when the school decided in 2007 to terminate its full-time MBA programme, which it had launched just three years previously.

The new president's first task will be to heal the wounds and even though he has been in the position for just six months, Prof Strannegård has a clear strategy in place. The school will build on its exclusive reputation in Sweden and work closely with Swedish business to educate an elite cadre of graduates, he says. Mergers with other business schools and overseas campuses are definitely not on the agenda.

"I want the school to be a place where people feel it is small but great," he says, pointing out that the school is extremely selective. "On our bachelor programme we are as selective as an Ivy League school. I want SSE to be a real shining star."

The school has just 300 students on the three-year bachelor degree and an additional 300 on the two-year masters programme, and there are no plans to expand. One reason is the funding.

Because undergraduate and masters-level degrees are free to European students, increasing numbers brings no financial fillip for the school. SSE can charge fees only for the executive MBA programme and executive education, which are unregulated. What is more, because SSE is a private business school, it gets less than 20 per cent of its funds from government.

The complexity of the funding situation continues, with 35 per cent of revenue derived from an endowment established 100 years ago, along with research grants and income from some 100 corporate partners. Even Prof Strannegård concedes: "It is a very strange funding model."

But he clearly intends for it to work to his advantage. He has started his tenure as president of the school with a SKr110m ($14.9m) gift from two Swedish foundations to promote and teach sustainable business. It is a topic close to his heart and that of the school. "Sustainability is something Scandinavia is well known for," he says, arguing these are topics that should not be isolated into specific courses but should permeate business teaching overall. Courses will be redesigned around big global challenges. "The way to go about education is to let the students dig into these global challenges."

Hand in hand with this will be a more international curriculum, but Prof Strannegård has very strong views on the identity of the school: "You have to have a global outlook with local roots." Living and working in Sweden is substantively different from working in London, Paris or New York, he says, adding: "It's not for everyone, of course." B

From the drawing board

Joined-up thinking

A student idea became France's first peer-to-peer car rental service. By Jonathan Moules

Car-sharing clubs are not a new idea, but the connectedness that the web provides has made it easier to build a large-scale operation, as Essec graduates Alexandre Grandremy and Gary Cohen have proved with their business, Deways.

The Problem

Essec Business School, where Grandremy and Cohen met in 2008 during their masters studies, is on the outskirts of Paris, where public transport runs less frequently and to fewer places than in the centre of the city. As a result, the pair found getting about was an issue. Students may crave the freedom a car offers but often cannot afford to buy one.

"The idea of launching a car-sharing platform came up because I didn't own a car and began to regularly borrow Gary's Smart car for day trips and weekends," Grandremy says. "I wanted to give Gary back proper compensation and assessed the actual cost of borrowing his car."

PHOTO: MAGALI COROUGE

Driving ambition: Alexandre Grandremy, left, and Gary Cohen

The Solution

Grandremy and Cohen soon realised other students might be interested in sharing cars. They started to develop the technology to do this online, operating as a social network in which users could share details about where they wanted to go, what vehicles they offered and the quality of the cars they hired. The business evolved into France's first peer-to-peer car rental service.

If you are looking for a car to rent in Paris, for instance (the company has expanded its operations to offer rentals in Marseille and Lyon too), you go to deways.com, type in your location and available cars will appear on screen with trust and feedback references from previous rentals. Users can book a car in a minute, Deways says. The car owner receives an SMS and email, upon which they can approve or decline the booking request.

The rental contract and insurance are covered by Deways for the period of the rental, cutting down the administration normally involved in hiring a car. The insurance covers major risks for car owners too, encouraging them to advertise their vehicles with Deways.

"The community aspect of Deways allows for more trust between car sharers – an important factor in a sharing situation," Grandremy says.

How the service was developed

The founders quickly realised that the problem they were solving was not just an issue for university campuses but that the system held appeal for many people living in big cities.

Building trust is also a big part of Deways. The service remains a community-centred car-sharing platform, allowing people to connect with one another by affinity, focusing on common interests such as hobbies, their profession or their school, with the aim of creating more opportunities for "human connections", even as it spreads across the country, Grandremy says.

"Our team encourages car owners to build their own community of users in their neighbourhood or at work using Deways' self-marketing tools," he adds.

"This allows for more trust between users and can mean more stable revenues for car owners. It also lowers Deways' dependence on search engine advertising, which is very costly for a start-up and affects the profitability of its structure."

Both the founders say they wanted to become entrepreneurs, having grown up in families where people worked as freelancers or started companies themselves. But they also admit they did not imagine their big idea would be renting cars.

"Alexandre is an engineer in energy systems and had in mind to develop a business in renewable energies," Cohen says. "I was about to develop a business in phone systems. We created Deways, our first business, based on a system that was answering our own needs."

In 2012, after completing a proof of concept at a few of the better known French business school campuses, the founders raised €1.2m from Eyal Aronoff, the US-based co-founder of Quest Software, and in grants from the French government.

Deways has more than 13,000 users, including drivers and car owners, and predicts this total will pass 20,000 in the next four months. The founders expect the business to be in profit by 2015.

What next?

Cohen and Grandremy are raising more financing to expand operations. They also face competition from car-sharing services that are expanding across Europe from other countries, such as US-based Zipcar, which already has a large presence in the UK.

"We are looking for investors with vision who believe, like us, in a more collaborative and efficient world where every car owner can finally not only be free from the economic constraints of [ownership] but also turn it into a business opportunity," Grandremy says.

"With our community approach, we will extract all of the sleeping value of our millions of cars and bring it back to the car owners." Ⓑ

Jargon buster: 'disruption'

Being "disruptive", when expressed by a start-up's founder, refers to the act of forcing one's way into a niche, bludgeoning the existing competition with a new method of delivering a service and generally injecting greater efficiency into something people have done or used since time immemorial.

In this sense, the word "disruption" can be paired with any industry and the start-up team will sound plausible, such has been the effect of the internet in scaring corporate bosses in even the most low tech of businesses. Disruption fits an age where the internet is changing everything, from the way we shop – Asos has disrupted high street fashion, for instance – to how we move around, as in the case of Zipcar and Uber's disruption of the car and taxi markets. The worldwide web is the ultimate disruptive change in this context.

While this may all sound great, a problem arises when it seems every start-up is using the word to describe what it does. **- JM**

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Social media upstarts

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Are you ready for the FT quiz?

Hopes & Fears, p46
Seeing the big picture

books

Ancient and modern

Morgen Witzel on an argument for the relevance of the classics

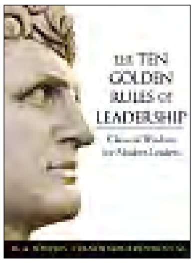
In his novel *The Go-Between*, LP Hartley wrote: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." The belief that the past is irrelevant and nothing useful can be learned from it is deeply ingrained in much of modern management thought. As a result, a great deal of valuable wisdom either has to be relearnt or gets lost altogether.

Fortunately, there are books such as *The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership* to remind us that the past is rich in experience. Many things that were true 2,500 years ago, argue MA Soupios and Panos Mourdoukoutas, are still true today.

The authors begin by advancing the view that leadership is neither an art nor a science, but a philosophy. "Only those men and women who have developed a carefully conceived philosophy of life are capable of genuine leadership," they say, arguing that philosophical inquiry is one of the primary skills required of a leader.

The book draws heavily on classical Greek philosophy, including the works of the "big three" – Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – and pre-Socratic philosophers going back as far as Hesiod. The idea of "golden rules" is itself borrowed from classical literature, and the rules set out in this book are distinctly classical in form: they include such tenets as "do not waste energy on things you cannot change", "always embrace the truth", "live life by a higher code" and "always evaluate information with a critical eye" – statements that might have come straight out of the fables of Aesop.

The discussion of rule nine – "never underestimate the power of personal integrity" (the quote borrowed from the playwright Sophocles) – begins with a proposition of deceptive simplicity: there are two ways to succeed in leadership – the hard way and the easy way. The easy way "involves a denial of principle and integrity". That's all right, then; surely we will choose the easy way. No, say the authors, because the success we gain by doing so is illusory and short term; in the long run, we will harm our organisations and ourselves.



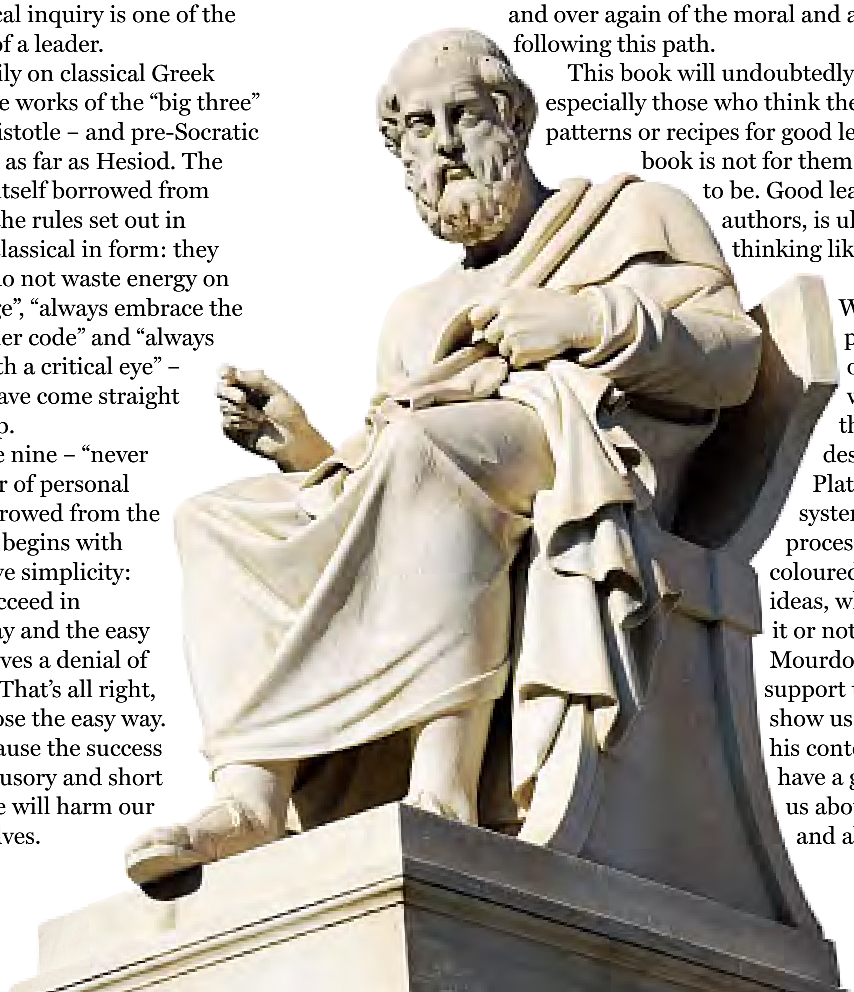
Lasting legacy: all westerners, it has been said, are the intellectual descendants of Plato, below

"Negative traits such as fear, suspicion, deceitfulness and so on are malignancies that inevitably fail to advance the interests of either the organisation or its managers," they say. "When treachery and cunning become embedded features of a corporate culture, the institution is certain to forfeit the motivation and loyalty of its people." Short-term payoff turns, over the longer term, into a toxic culture of destruction where people are more interested in scoring points off each other than doing what the organisation should do: serving the needs of its clients and customers.

Good leaders are people able to face the harder path, that of conscience and morality. By doing so they inspire trust among staff – and, indeed, all stakeholders – and have a better chance of success. The authors acknowledge the siren call of quick success by dishonest means, but warn over and over again of the moral and actual dangers of following this path.

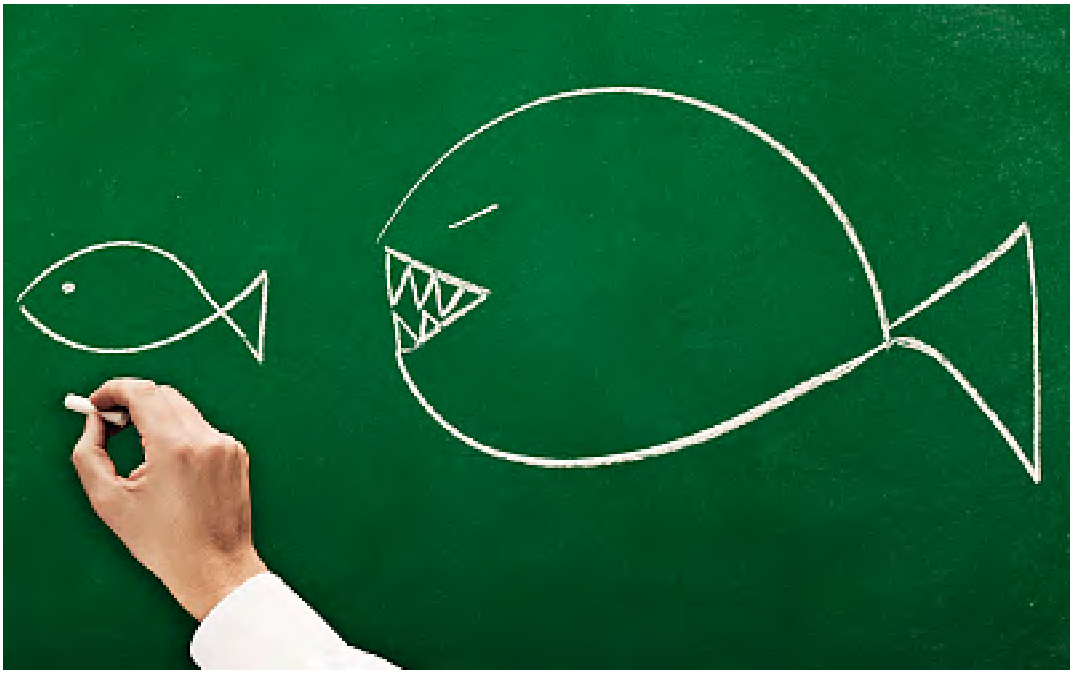
This book will undoubtedly annoy some, especially those who think there are pre-set patterns or recipes for good leadership; this book is not for them. Nor is it meant to be. Good leadership, say the authors, is ultimately about thinking like a leader.

Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher, once observed all westerners were the intellectual descendants of Plato; our education systems and thinking processes are heavily coloured by Platonic ideas, whether we know it or not. Soupios and Mourdoukoutas not only support this view but show us that Plato and his contemporaries still have a great deal to tell us about leadership – and about life. Ⓑ



PHOTOS: TITELIO, ODEON16/DREAMSTIME

Upstart start-ups



Lessons for small fry taking on big fish. By Kate Bevan

Have you signed up for Ello? In September thousands flocked to the new invitation-only social network that quickly became known as the "anti-Facebook" platform, with requests for invitations peaking at 40,000 an hour, according to Paul Budnitz, one of the founders.

But why would you want to join yet another social network when there are already more than enough time-sinks in the form of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest and Google+? Ello's USP is that it has pledged never to sell adverts, nor to sell your user data. To underline that commitment, in October it became a public benefit corporation, which legally binds Ello to its pledges. As of October, according to Budnitz, the social network had some 1m users, with another 3m on the waiting list.

However, the excitement around Ello seems to have faded, with concerns ranging from the fact that it has now secured nearly $6m in venture capital funding in two rounds, to disquiet over the lack of privacy options (which have since been added to the site) and irritation about how flaky it is to use.

Ello's launch provides some useful lessons for any start-up. The first is that it is very difficult to disrupt big, established players. Ello is just one of many networks that have appeared over the years that offer something different to Facebook and Twitter.

There have been three significant attempts to challenge Facebook and Twitter: Diaspora, App.net and Google+. None has been successful. Diaspora is the most interesting: it was set up as an open-source, distributed platform. Rather than being run centrally by the owners, anyone can host a node, or "pod", on their own servers, which means anyone with the technical knowhow could set up a pod for their own group or family. Those who just want to hang out on the network can sign up to someone else's pod. Rather than seeking venture capital funding, Diaspora raised cash via Kickstarter, the crowdfunding platform, and much of the development work on the codebase is done by volunteers.

Hard lessons: privacy issues and technical shortcomings are just two reasons why alternative networks have floundered

With just over 1.1m users Diaspora has a respectable user base, but is never going to challenge any other network. Neither is App.net, a Twitter-like service that was set up when Twitter decided to limit access to its application programming interface, which allows programmes to interact with the platform. Instead of being free to use, app.net set up a paid subscription plan, hoping to attract users who prefer not to share data about their activities with aggregators and advertisers.

That has sort of worked, in that App.net passed a significant hurdle when it announced enough people had renewed subscriptions for the network to be profitable and to continue. The bad news was that the renewal rate was not high enough to employ anyone. In a blog post in May, Dalton Caldwell, one of the founders, said: "We are making the difficult decision to no longer employ any salaried employees, including founders."

The biggest of the post-Facebook flops is Google+, which many Google users disliked because until recently the company required users of its other services, including YouTube and Picasa, to link those accounts to a G+ account. Google+ claims some 1.15bn registered users, but it appears the numbers may be pumped up by people using YouTube, reviewing apps on Play or uploading their images to Picasa. The number of active users is more like 343m, according to Statista, an online data portal. That is a respectable number but a long way from being a Facebook killer. And if not even the mighty Google can disrupt Facebook, anyone smaller should ask themselves why they think they can.

Another lesson any start-up should take from Ello is to pick your time to launch carefully. Ello popped into the limelight at around the time Facebook announced it would require users to stick to their real names, thus setting off protests from privacy

PHOTO: CRISTIAN BAITG/GETTY IMAGES

If not even the mighty Google can disrupt Facebook, anyone smaller should ask themselves why they think they can

campaigners, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and others.

Facebook has since backtracked on that pronouncement, but concern that people who use a false name would be "outed" drove many to have a look at Ello, which does not require you to use your real name. It might be a coincidence that Facebook's move sparked such a surge of interest in Ello, but others have suggested the burst of publicity around Ello at that time was a deliberate move to lure drag queens and others who prefer to use alternative names away from Facebook.

However, that threw up another problem – and another lesson for start-ups. Ello has now implemented privacy controls, but they were not in place as the new users flooded in. The lesson here is: be ready for your users.

Ello makes it clear it is still in beta development, but functionality remains flaky. It is not easy to find your way round, the user interface is poor, there is no search facility, so it is difficult to find your friends, and some things simply do not work. At the peak, Ello had to suspend new sign-ups because its servers could not cope with the load. As a result some people turned away. A quick poll of my friends revealed several only signed up to get their preferred user name.

Can Ello work? Maybe, but I doubt it. It plans to make money by selling additional functionality, such as allowing you to control two accounts from one sign-up, which in some ways makes it more like an app with in-app purchases. But the founders are vague on what features it will add and how much they will cost. I also predict that while it will not actually sell ads, brands will be able to pay to boost their content: actual ads are not the only way to spread your message.

Getting users and keeping users is a challenge. Ello is a good case study in how to gain traction – and how to annoy and drive away users. Any start-up should keep an eye on it. B

From A to B: apps that work out a way

Meet Me Halfway
Android, free
An excellent idea that could be better executed. Put in your starting point and the other person's starting point and the app will highlight a driving, cycling or walking route and flag up possible meeting places near the midpoint, which you can filter to include eateries, bars, casinos, hotels and shopping malls.

The app's fatal flaw is that it does not offer a public transport option, and adding addresses from your contacts is clunky: you have to scroll through to find the right one. Those irritations aside, it is a useful companion both at home and in unfamiliar cities.

Here Maps
Android (beta)
Windows Phone, free
here.com
Nokia sold its handset division to Microsoft, but it has retained its mapping division. Its excellent mapping app, which includes turn-by-turn navigation, has so far been exclusive to Windows Phone but it is now available in beta for Android.

Maps are available offline, so once you have downloaded a country map, you do not need to keep data roaming on, saving a fortune in mobile costs. The interface is a matter of personal taste: I prefer it to Google Maps. Nokia is due to release a version for iOS, too. - **KB**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Where's best?

We asked readers: would you study business in Europe or elsewhere – and why? By Charlotte Clarke

The MBA is a US concoction – in Europe only @LBS can hold its own. Moaad Taufik @Raufers

"The biggest advantage I saw was the opportunity to analyse case studies from businesses outside the US. Since most of the case studies used in north American business schools all pretty much come from the same source, it was great to get a larger world perspective on business models and operating systems." – Patrick Shandonay, graduate of an executive education programme at Esade

"Despite starting my study just weeks before Bear Stearns collapsed, I'd study in Europe again in a heartbeat. Between the connections made and the value for time (and money), I've managed to create my dream company – investing in and supporting social tech ventures, for which London is most definitely the place to be."
– Glen Mehn, partner at Bethnal Green Ventures, managing director at Social Innovation Camp, and University of Oxford Saïd Business School MBA graduate

"Based on 35 years of setting up and running businesses in Europe and Asia, I would suggest that anyone studying business should have three legs to their faculty/school choice: one leg must in Europe and/or North America, another leg in South America or Africa, and the final leg in Asia (either China or India). Why? In order to develop successful high-growth businesses, you will need to understand how to scale and meet the needs of several major regional markets."
– Michael Cross, non-executive chairman of Rezatec

"Given the choice I'd study in Europe again in a heartbeat. It was one of the best decisions, although at the end of the programme I ended up accepting a position in the US. Why? I made great connections, got a great return on the time and money I spent plus I gained confidence that I could adapt and thrive in a variety of situations."
– Sheila Torrico, management consultant and MBA graduate of Iese Business School (including an exchange trip to RSM)

"Since my graduation from a London-based business school, I have had the chance to work in Asia. The reputation of UK business schools is very strong in Asia, either because of the many European expats working in the region or because local talent chose to study in the UK."
– Swen Werner

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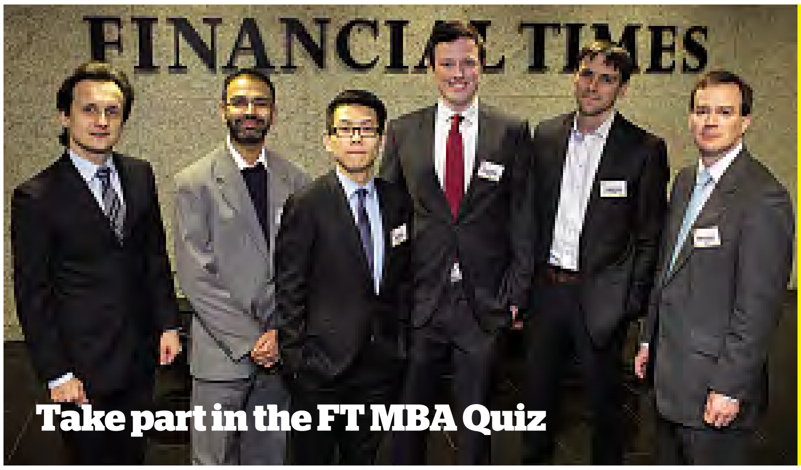

Take part in the FT MBA Quiz

Teams of MBA students and alumni can pit their wits against each other in a quiz at the FT's London offices.

Compered by FT management editor Andrew Hill, the contest on February 24 2015 will test teams' knowledge of business and raise money for the International Rescue Committee, the humanitarian charity and FT seasonal charity appeal partner. The event – won last year by the team from Imperial College Business School (pictured) – will also mark the launch of the annual FT MBA Challenge, in which students can apply their new skills to help the charity. For more details and to enter a team, see ft.com/mba-quiz

Yongkang Ng

'This is the real deal,' I thought, but everyone felt the same – not knowing what to expect, nervous but with an open mind

Yongkang Ng graduated from Mannheim Business School's MBA programme in 2013. He is now a technology professional with SAP, an enterprise software company in Walldorf, Germany, and focuses on market and technology strategy. Originally from Singapore, he previously worked within the telecoms industry in Asia-Pacific in operational roles covering marketing and big data strategy.

Looking back at my MBA one year on, I realise that most of what I learnt and apply today in my work at SAP, the software company, came not from the lessons but from my peers.

Having started as an analyst in telecoms, I was interested in an MBA to learn more about business fundamentals but also because I wanted to understand how investment decisions are made and justified. This was important in my work, where I had been responsible on the client side for managing IT projects and procuring systems.

I remember feeling overwhelmed on the first day of the Mannheim Business School MBA when I sat next to finance, legal and investment professionals. We were split into teams and my group comprised a German IT security auditor, a Russian businessman and an Emirati defence industry executive. "This is the real deal," I remember thinking, but everyone felt the same – not knowing what to expect, nervous but keeping an open mind. We started connecting by sharing our motivations and hopes.

My main motivation for coming from Singapore was the thriving technology sector. Having worked in big data, I felt Germany was right not only for what I would learn on the MBA but also for the industry talks I attended. It helped that technology-orientated firms such as SAP, Bombardier and Deutsche Telekom were nearby.

My mentors advised "keeping an open mind and remaining flexible". Sure enough, I found at first that in most of the business cases I lacked skills or the industry insight needed for challenges in areas such as mining supply chains. I had to tap into my peers' experience – a lesson in leading teams of people with more experience in a particular field.

One project involved rushing overnight to complete a pitch involving train propulsion systems, for which we had to tap into our Russian teammate's experience of heavy industries and another's knowledge of government procurement. Although we did not get the consultancy assignment, it was great preparation for a project redeveloping distribution and pricing strategies for one of Europe's largest building materials companies, based in Frankfurt, where we had the opportunity to present to the chief executive and the chief procurement officer.

"Having an open calendar" was another lesson, and it was especially important to me. Being interested in technology, the next opportunity may lay just around the corner. There was the temptation to skip industry presentations because of the workload, but I followed the advice that it is "not the grades you make, but the hands you shake" and made the effort to attend.

I remember learning how German venture capital firms such as LBBW Venture Capital made funding decisions for start-ups, and how tech companies such as SAP make a business case for investing in new database technologies that help businesses accelerate their processes.

Having come from an operations background, I was finally learning about "the other side of the table" and how investment decisions are made.

The MBA also gave me an opportunity to participate in business plan competitions. It was great practice to apply what we learnt and I had the chance to work with three classmates on a mobile app for the restaurant industry, which made the finals of the European Business Plan competition. Our school connected us with alumni who did similar business cases and while we did not win, I learnt a lot about cashflow planning, growth rate forecasting and market adoption strategies.

Looking back, nothing is more satisfying than applying such "start-up" lessons to my work at SAP on go-to-market strategies for new technology concepts. The MBA was certainly life-changing, if tough. But as one classmate put it, it builds character, and as I am discovering that higher up in the business world, character and integrity are what matters the most.

PHOTO: MARTIN LEISSL