

HOW TO GET A JOB

PART 1

By Mark Brownley

Masters, yes, but MBA?

Checklist

- 1.** Be absolutely clear on your reasons for undertaking postgraduate study in the first place. If it's to further your engineering career and domain expertise, a Master of Engineering is a safer and more credible bet. An MBA can come after that.
- 2.** Talk to a range of industry professionals and find out what they consider to be the highly prized postgraduate qualifications – of the future. Leaders of industry have unique insights into how their business is changing and what skills will be required as disruption and structural change accelerates.
- 3.** Keep an eye on the future, don't get trapped in the rear-view mirror. MBAs gained a lot of attention and traction in the 1980s and 1990s but these days, they are common place. It used to be a differentiator. Not anymore.
- 4.** Recognise that engineering will continue to get more complex and sophisticated. Your ability to adapt and synthesise and expand your domain knowledge is crucial. There are many ways of achieving this, traditional postgraduate study is only one. Do your research.
- 5.** MBAs do not guarantee or underpin a leadership career or a CEO appointment. Many CEOs do not have MBAs.
- 6.** Your record of achievement will almost always carries more weight than a second-tier MBA. A Harvard MBA might be different. Experienced leaders and recruiters focus primarily on achievements; qualifications are a nice adjunct (except where they are required to demonstrate professional competence and practice).
- 7.** Do a cost-benefit analysis. Post-graduate study is expensive. Not only in fees but also in income foregone if you study on a full-time basis. Be clear on the benefits that you expect to see and don't get hung up on "starting salary" statistics. It's not where you start, it's where you end up.
- 8.** Accept that further commercial specialisation will be required regardless of whether you possess an MBA or not. It can't teach you enough. An MBA is a worthy addition to your CV but it's actually not a degree in anything.
- 9.** Consider more specialised and structured business education if your aspiration is leadership. Engineers need to establish their commercial credentials to be considered for leadership or entry to the C-suite (CEO, CFO, COO, CIO). An MBA won't give you that, a Master in Applied Finance will.

- 10.** Qualifications have a shelf life. The relevance of a qualification completed years or decades ago is questionable at best. What's of more interest to employers is what you know now and how you can use it to improve their fortunes. You have to stay current and you can't take traditional postgraduate degrees on any sort of regular basis. Think agile in the knowledge acquisition stakes. Short courses...

STILL HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Just email us at tellus@myengineerexchange.com and we'll get right back to you.

