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“Without an understanding of the other culture, you cannot build up trust, which is a prerequisite for co-operation required to make your business successful.”

Tomorrow's BUSINESS LEADERS

Esme Christie talks to Andrea Schenker-Wicki and Mario Ramo »

The Programme

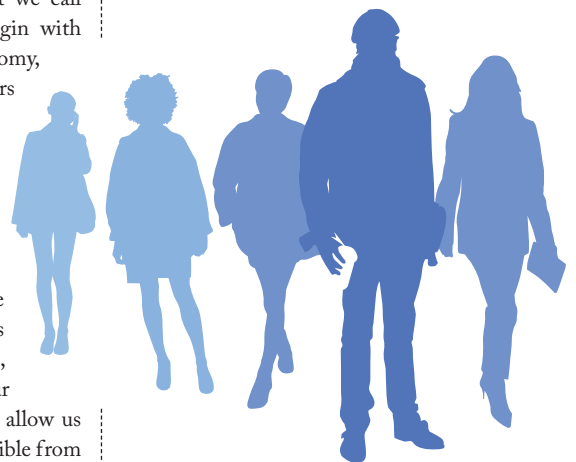
Q The University of Zurich promotes its EMBA as being a 'comprehensive view of management problems.' Kindly expand upon this and what this entails for the student and the programme.

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: Executive MBA students work and study at the same time; we provide the setting that makes it possible to combine professional, family and academic life.

Our values lie in the direction of producing leaders for business and society in a globally connected world. That means we want responsible people who are aiming at doing sustainable business and creating long-term values for their organizations all over the world. We do not want or need managers who solely manage, or know which toolkit should be employed. To reach our objectives we carefully assess our candidates and we have designed a curriculum which allows the students to create long-term values.

Q Kindly discuss the Introductory Curriculum, Core Curriculum and the Diploma Curriculum formats and explain the academic merits of each.

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: We have what we call our "Executive MBA House". We begin with the pillars - fundamentals of the economy, statistics and systems theory. If the pillars are solid, then we can build the walls, which consist of classic subjects such as finance, marketing, organisation, management leadership and production logistics which can be described as core competences. These competences are our internal strengths, but we also have to be aware of external factors - economic and institutional restrictions, for example. These restrictions and our internal strengths or core competences allow us to appraise what kind of business is possible from the internal and external point of view.



Lastly, to top things off - quasi as the roof of our Executive MBA house -, we have intercultural management, which is becoming more and more important as the world gets smaller. We also delve into value discussion and ethical leadership because you have to decide what kind of business is economically and ethically suitable and sustainable for your organisation. Do you want to execute just any kind of business or do you have values banning a certain kind of business? This is how we have built up the programme, with the pillars, the core, the walls, and then at the end, the value discussion - the roof.

Mario Ramo: This also explains the wide range of topics that we cover - from general management to marketing strategies - you have to bring these different topics into that Executive MBA house to make it complete.

Q Given the evolutionary correspondence between business and business education, how does the University manage to keep its EMBA 'on the pulse'?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: We maintain several sources of new input. First of all our academics network, which is research driven and fundamental to our development. This is where we find evidence-based results on the concepts that are proven to be good.

Second, we are very well-embedded in the local and the national business networks. Third, our students and alumni also provide input. Each course is evaluated, the evaluations are discussed with the students, and we procure propositions on how to make things better. Fourth, from time to time we do structured interviews with the business world, especially before a major revision of the programme. The university needs to know what the economic environment, as well as industries, expect from highly-educated, highly-experienced people. In this, we are quite scientifically-driven and I would not propose a major revision of the programme without knowing if I am on the right track, because the EMBA market is very competitive.

Mario Ramo: Our focus on intercultural management helps to differentiate us from other EMBA and MBA programmes in the German-speaking part of Europe. The feedback we receive from our business or alumni networks is very positive and encourage us to follow this track.

We developed intercultural management for different countries including the U.S. and emerging markets, Brazil, Russia, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa - which will become increasingly important in the years to come - India, China, and the Eastern part of

Europe, which in terms of business culture is different from the central part of Europe. We only work with teachers who are from those business cultures, not teachers who just learn things from books, and have close ties to the economy which accounts for the quality of our intercultural management modules.

Q What are the typical characteristics or highlights of the programme at Zurich compared to those of its rivals?

Mario Ramo: First, on a formal level, the programme structure, because it is precisely tailored to working professionals. Consequently, absence from work is limited to two working days every two weeks for a total duration of 18 months.

Second, with regard to contents, the Executive MBA programme at the University of Zurich sets an international and intercultural focus by dedicating about 30% of the curriculum to issues related to intercultural management. The main objective is to provide students with a deeper understanding of the broad international context to which executives need to be sensitive when making global business decisions.

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: Precisely. Without an understanding of the other culture, you cannot build up trust, which is a prerequisite for co-operation required to make your business successful.

A highlight of the programme is the study trip to the School of Management at Yale University and the Fudan University in Shanghai. The teaching style and the "Yale spirit" as well as the Chinese way of doing business in Shanghai are truly unforgettable experiences.

Student Life

Q Zurich is one of Europe's most geographically central cities as well as one of the world's most important locations. As a result, does this not only mean you have a large international student core, but also that your students can benefit from a wide range of shared knowledge?

Mario Ramo: The studentship is internationally composed but a high percentage is still coming from the German-speaking part of Europe. This is mostly due to the time setting of our programme which is less suitable for students from overseas. But, we have a wide range of industries which our students are coming from. This makes for very exciting discussions and an exchange of knowledge is guaranteed.

Q Does the structure of the EMBA programme at Zurich encourage student interaction and the nourishment of practical social skills?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: EMBA students learn from each other as much as they learn from professors, especially at that age and with so much collective experience. So interaction is high and guaranteed in each module. With respect to social



“The university needs to know what the economic environment, as well as industries, expect from highly-educated, highly-experienced people.”

skills, we do not have a specific module on this topic, per se, but we have the Information and Communication module with video-feedbacks and simulated press conferences. Besides, we also offer voluntary coachings in the realm of personal and career development.

Our faculty is quite reluctant with respect to a pure module in social skills. The reason is the academic background of the program. However, without social competencies, you will never move to a higher position, or efficiently work with other people.

Q Aside from the MBA programme, what would attract a student to study at the University of Zurich?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: I think we should point out the high reputation of our faculty; from a research point of view, we are the best faculty in the German-speaking environment and we have two international quality labels for business

schools (AACSB, EQUIS). Additionally, the University of Zurich offers a wide range of interesting topics from arts to life science which could be studied and last but not least the city of Zurich has a very high quality of life, one of the highest worldwide.

Practical Business Exposure

Q Does the student at Zurich benefit from industrial placements, site visits and exposure to the realities of the business world?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: We do not offer industrial placements for our EMBA students due to their age and senior positions. Our EMBA students are thirty-nine-plus years old in the average and are senior executives. We are neither doing site visits with them in Switzerland. We travel to India and China and do a lot of different site visits in Shanghai and Hyderabad, but there is no need to do so in Switzerland.

“When you have a wide range of students and everyone has a different point of view, it makes for a very exciting discussion and an exchange of knowledge is guaranteed.”



“The variety of industry profiles in the classes provides course participants with an ideal forum for the exchange of know-how and valuable insights into other industries.”



Biographies:

★ **Prof. Andrea Schenker-Wicki** is the Dean for the Executive MBA programme at the University of Zurich.

★ **Mario Ramo** is the Managing Director for the Executive MBA programme at the University of Zurich.

Mario Ramo: With respect to China and India, we are especially interested in how Swiss companies do business there, how they manage to get along with the government, the legal environment, things that are interesting and important when you are abroad.

Q Does the University ensure that it has an intake that brings a wide range of business experience to the classroom?

Mario Ramo: The fascinating thing is the very heterogeneous class composition. The variety of industry profiles in the classes provide course participants with an ideal forum for the exchange of know-how and valuable insights into other industries. Preparing a new class we always make sure that the composition is broad enough. Fortunately, we never had problems to do so.

Q With the number of worthy competitors increasing by the year, how has the University of Zurich managed to continue to compete at the highest level?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: Thanks to the Parliament of the Canton Zurich, we are in an enviable situation, where we have quite sound finances and are able to compete with other institutions. This is true for the whole university and especially for our faculty which has been in the strategical focus of the university board in the last years. This made it possible to hire a number of internationally highly reputed professors.

Q Do you see the crest of the MBA wave peaking and declining, has this process already begun or, indeed, do you feel it ever will?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: In the future there will be a lot more people in the tertiary educational system than there are today especially with respect to the emerging markets such as China and India. But also in the Western societies we see the political will of different countries to have more people in the tertiary education system. Therefore, the MBA market is still not a saturated market; it is a growing market.

Mario Ramo: We also surmise from our information events that the numbers are continually growing.

Looking to the Future

Q You are a highly innovative institution, as such, what can new and existing students expect from the University, in terms of programme developments, over the next 12 to 18 months?

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: We have restructured Intercultural Management because we had to enlarge the topic. The focus on Asia, Russia and South America was too narrow so new regions and countries such as Africa, especially North Africa and Indonesia, for example, had to be included in the curriculum. Further revisions will be made to Leadership and Ethics, restructuring and adapting to the current environment. Continuous adaptation is key!. And last but not least

we are evaluating new regions, especially in the emerging countries, for our study trips.

Q With increased competition in all areas of professional life, do you feel that the growing number of people opting to undertake an MBA course will detract from its value as a consequence?

Mario Ramo: The growing number of people interested in an EMBA is basically associated with the increasing need of any employee for life-long learning in order to stay up-to-date. The discussion about the detraction of the value of an EMBA due to this development has been going on for many years. So far, we have not seen any inflation on the labour market, at least not concerning our offerings.

However, what we observe is that, the labour market is beginning to differentiate more and more in terms of the institutions that offer an EMBA: The EMBA title of a prestigious institution has a higher value than that of a rather unknown institution operating more on a local basis.

Prof. Schenker-Wicki: At the end of the day, the important question is, where did you get your title from? In the German-speaking part of Europe there are approximately 200 EMBA or MBA programmes, so competition is tough. We are ambitious and want to be one of the best in Europe in alignment with our Faculty. □

University of Zurich: Student Perspectives

Esme Christie talks to Marcus Gerl, Markus Borkenhagen and Marc Siegenthaler »

Q Some jest that after eighteen plus years in education, that is more than enough for a lifetime. What, therefore, inspired you to return to the books after being in a successful job for the past number of years?

Marc Siegenthaler: A greater number of international firms have moved into Switzerland over the last couple of years which has led to increased competition as more and more experienced people join the workforce. Consequently, you have to be prepared to compete in the labour market. I think the Zurich EMBA provides me with a great opportunity to compete over the next 10 to 15 years.

Marcus Gerl: To create a bigger horizon, push myself a little bit further, compete in my company and get one or two steps higher.

The idea, nowadays, is that you should continue to learn, unlike a couple of decades ago when you went to university, worked and never really studied again. I want more input, I want to be updated, I want to see how things have developed. Personal development was one of the main reasons I came back to education.

Q How did you successfully manage the dual workloads?

Marcus Gerl: In my life, there is, undoubtedly, a

third aspect, and that is family. I would strongly recommend that anyone who wants to do a programme like this talks to his or her partner before doing so, because without family support, it's very tough. Most of us are roughly 38 to 45 years old and have children - it is not so much the studying and the job, but the triangle that makes it difficult.

Q What were the thoughts of your employers on this dual direction: did they worry about there being a negative impact on your productivity?

Markus Borkenhagen: I have a clear contract with my company which states that I cannot leave for the next three years. We have always kept the lines of communication open and, given that my productivity has been good, I have not had any problems.

Marc Siegenthaler: I also have to stay with my employers for at least another two years. I had support in terms of my company paying the fees, but I didn't get that much time to spend on the courses here. However, during classes, we still had the opportunity to continue working so, if you had to go out to make calls, it was fine. It's different from a normal class.

Marcus Gerl: It was clearly stated by my company that it was absolutely unnecessary to do this course, but if I really insisted, it would be my obligation, as long as I made sure that the business would not suffer. I would say a company usually has mixed feelings about this because, during the period of study, you have less concentration on the job and, afterwards, you are more attractive to the competitor. Furthermore, if you stay with the company, you are in a position to negotiate a better salary.

Q What was it about the Zurich EMBA that made it stand out from its rivals?

Marcus Gerl: The pricing is very competitive and the reputation of the Zurich EMBA is very good indeed. I could have spent double attending another university but without the reputation that this school has.



Student Biographies:

★ **Markus Borkenhagen** holds a university degree in engineering from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in Germany and a PhD in Material Sciences from ETH Lausanne in Switzerland. Markus is a Director (QA RA) and a Member of the Management Board for Stryker Osteosynthesis in Switzerland.

★ **Marc Siegenthaler** holds a Bachelor in Business Administration from the Bern University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland. Marc is the Head of the Budgeting Division at the Federal Office of Personnel FOPER in Switzerland - responsibility for the development of bases for planning and budgeting of personnel expenditures at federal level.

★ **Marcus Gerl** holds a Master of Science in Business Administration from the University of Münster in Germany. Marcus is the General Manager of Time Network Ltd. in Hong Kong and Time Network Swiss GmbH. Marcus is also the General Manager of European Brand Business for Chung Nam Corporation, Hong Kong and a Member of the Board of Directors for Roamer Watch Co. S.A. in Switzerland.

The courses on international management were important to me because if you are in a position, like I am - where you are dealing with 60 different cultures - you have to acquire an understanding of how people behave and do business in certain ways.

Markus Borkenhagen: It's very renowned. The structure of the programme - being in blocks of two weeks - makes it easily manageable. What attracted me the most were the two foreign trips to China and the U.S.; the modules of international business seemed totally different from other programmes.

Marc Siegenthaler: The university has a good reputation and the right accreditations. I think that Zurich as a city is world-famous. It's in the middle of Switzerland and you can get from Bern, where I live, to Zurich, in an hour (by train), so you don't have to spend a lot of time travelling

Q Did you learn any non-business skills on the course, such as enhanced interpersonal abilities?

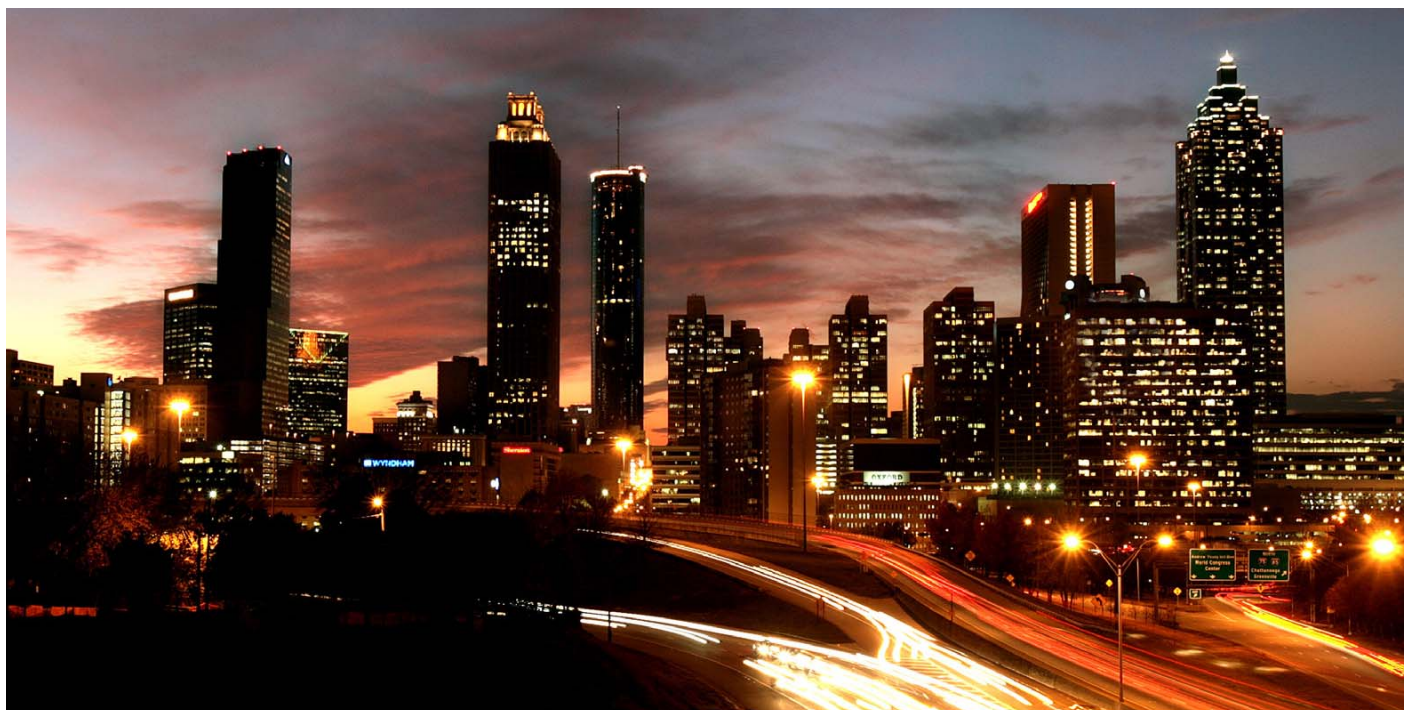
Marc Siegenthaler: In your own firm, people know you; they might not be so open because you are the boss, so getting feedback from forty of your peers was what I found interesting.

Markus Borkenhagen: We are leaders in our businesses so learning how to get along with one's peers and immersing oneself in this group dynamic was an interesting experience.

Q Before you began studying, what benefits did you anticipate the EMBA would bring to your career path?

Marcus Gerl: Career and money are considerations, but networking was more valuable to me.

Markus Borkenhagen: I wanted to improve my career and salary. Being an engineer, I have to make business and technical decisions. My dream was to get into a senior leadership role, therefore I wanted to know if I really liked the pure business side of things, and I wanted a better understanding. □



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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Esme Christie talks to Prof. Andreas Fischer »

Q How has your role as rector evolved and adapted with the evolution of the business environment?

Since our inception in 1833, we have been a state university and, up until 1999, we were part of the cantonal education system whereby all decisions were taken by the minister/secretary of education. However, in 1999 a new university law came into force, and this gave us autonomy, a global budget and an executive committee. So, to some extent, the role of the rector is now one of a CEO.

Universities, in general, have a strong tradition of independent thinking at all levels, so it is expected of the executive board to set certain aims and to focus the university, but to do this with the needs, wishes and strategies of the faculties in mind. We lead, but with the knowledge that we are leading an organization of experts.

As for the role of the rector, I do not feel that it needs changing. I hope that so far I have filled my role adequately by combining the functions of leader and negotiator. Both are necessary, for example, when the aims of the various faculties within the university are in conflict.

Q Have you been able to establish, develop and then maintain relationships with students and alumni?

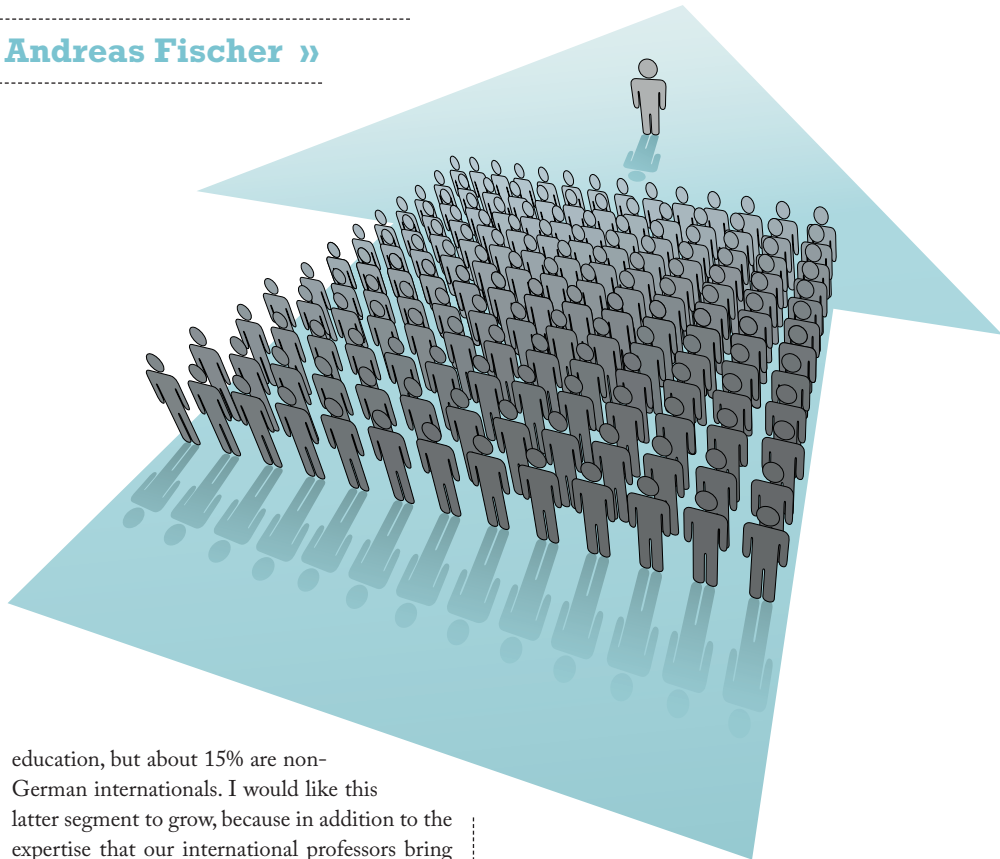
Continental European universities do not have a longstanding tradition of alumni organizations. At the University of Zurich we have a two-tier alumni organization which only dates back five or six years.

We strongly encourage faculties and, in some cases, departments to set up their own, separate alumni organizations. Alumni want a link back to the university, but they also want to meet like-minded people in their field.

The second tier is «UZH Alumni» (University of Zurich alumni), an umbrella organization which provides certain services, such as the management of addresses, discounts, networking opportunities and so forth.

Q Kindly discuss the faculty at the university.

We see ourselves as an international university, so we advertise all of our professorships globally. Half of the five hundred and twenty-strong faculty are non-Swiss; the majority of these are German, because German is the language of our



education, but about 15% are non-German internationals. I would like this latter segment to grow, because in addition to the expertise that our international professors bring to the table from their chosen fields, they also bring a different culture. This can only be enriching for the development of the university.

Q What is the university's strategy in order to keep Zurich evolving and moving forward in line with changes in the world of business and science?

The University of Zurich is Switzerland's biggest university and we are well-placed internationally. We are a comprehensive research university with strong programmes at the Bachelor, the Master and the PhD level. All our professors are researchers as well as teachers.

Q How is the University of Zurich perceived by the local business community?

Positively. The majority of our funding comes from taxpayers' money. I would like to see this continue, as it is a sign of the community's recognition of what we do and because it also helps us to keep tuition fees low. I would also like us to keep abreast of international developments, that is grow as a cantonal (state) university, but at the same time attract more funding from foun-

dations and the local business community. This will enable us to develop centres of competence and research priority programmes.

We plan to establish a university-wide foundation as a holding pen for money that we raise in this fashion.

Q To what extent does the university benefit from its relationship with external business?

At present, for example, about 20 professorships (mostly assistant professorships) are funded privately by companies and foundations. These sponsorships have to accord with our strategic aims, and we maintain complete freedom over whom we appoint, so the relationship is extremely beneficial. □

Biography:

★ Prof. Dr Andreas Fischer is the President of the University of Zurich.