



A PH. D'S MBA CHOICE

By Vincent Bricout

In 2002, Yao Ming left the Shanghai Sharks, starting his starring role at the Houston Rockets. The same year, I was taking a flight from Houston to Beijing on an assignment to lead a software product development effort that would span two Schlumberger product centres in these two cities, as well as our research center in Cambridge, England. This was my first trip to China. I could not wait to walk the Great Wall and the Forbidden City and to discover one of the oldest civilizations on earth.

These trips allowed me to sample delightful cuisines from different provinces in China each and every time. I even took a horse-back riding trip to Inner Mongolia. Indeed, in order to function more as a co-located team should, our virtual team met physically every two to three months, once in Houston and once Beijing. I ended up spending over four months in Beijing during the two-year project.

After four years in R&D, I had successfully transitioned to project management and gained experience in cross-centre, cross-cultural management. I was also being considered for a product development manager position in our technology centre in Japan. I was ready for the challenge of an MBA.

Like all other MBA applicants, my mind was boggled by all the different rankings out there, each of which seemed to paint a different picture. Having spent three years at Cornell University to receive a Ph.D., I knew that I did not want to spend two years to get an MBA. This ruled out most of the top programmes in the U.S.. In addition after ten years in the U.S., I was eager to spend time in either Europe or Asia.

I read about the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) in an Asian business magazine in the spring of 2004 and became more interested in spending time in Asia, particularly China, than in Europe. So in the spring of 2005, I decided to apply to CEIBS. I had also

applied to HKUST and received a scholarship there, but the programme was no longer considered the top programme in Asia or even in China. Furthermore, they offered no structured Mandarin Chinese language course.

One of the reasons I decided to come to CEIBS and to China was to learn Mandarin. I have taken roughly eighty hours of an accelerated Chinese language course so far, but learning Chinese is still a big challenge for me. Another reason for choosing CEIBS was to meet the future CEOs of Chinese companies. Building a rapport is even more important for doing business in China than just about anywhere else. Last but not least, I have always liked to do things a little differently.

Going to INSEAD would have been a good choice had I wanted to do strategy consulting, but I already turned down an offer to join McKinsey & Company after my Ph.D. Ultimately, I am not interested in businesses that do not serve some societal purpose. I have always been

interested in the field of energy and its impact on the environment. I have worked in solar energy, coal combustion, pollution control, and oil & gas. Energy has been the leitmotiv of my career.

My long-term goal is to help shape the energy policy of a country or group of countries such as the European Union. In the short term, I am interested in petroleum consulting where I can leverage seven years of experience or in joining a major oil & gas company, such as BP in the Far East. Recent developments in world energy economics have made this an exciting time full of business opportunities. Countries like Brazil, Russia, China and India are now in the picture and making the world a far different place.

With a two-digit growth rate, China has in many cases overlooked the impact of its development on the environment. Soon enough though, as it reaches a standard of living comparable to the West, clean-up and pollution control will open up lots of opportunities in terms of environmental consulting or energy-saving commercial and industrial products. An MBA from CEIBS will place me in an ideal position to

catalyze business in those areas between the European Union and China.

Having already been to Beijing, it is time for me to discover Shanghai. Seventeen years ago, I chose to go to an engineering school that was also about ten years old but already had a solid reputation. This September, they are starting a two-hundred-student programme in Shanghai. What a coincidence! Perhaps soon I will be teaching there as an adjunct professor alongside an environmental consulting business? **THELINK**

Vincent Bricout is CEIBS MBA2005 student.

