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Preparation for a new world

São Paulo, December 5, 2008 - Graduate courses are no longer a mere differential for those professionals who want to grow in their careers. Today they are a requirement for anyone in middle-management or high-management levels. According to headhunters, an MBA degree is extremely important for anyone from middle management up, who want to keep on advancing their careers.

This is the case of Eide Garcia, a chemical engineer and manager of Polystyrene Products at Dow Chemical for Latin America, who is currently attending an executive MBA at the University of Pittsburgh offered in São Paulo, Prague, Pittsburgh and, soon, in India.

On her quick visit to Brazil, the director of executive MBA programs at the University of Pittsburgh, Anne Nemer, told Gazeta Mercantil that the emerging countries are being targeted by important executives and, therefore, continued education courses should equip professionals with a "global mentality".

Also in line with the process where markets are ever less local and more global, internationalization of Brazilian companies requires executives with specific knowledge in international law and trade, as well as geopolitics. It is hardly surprising that business schools such as Ibmec see an increase in the number of enrollments for courses in these areas and should open new programs for this segment in 2010.

Sustainability is yet another area where new graduate courses are being launched, in view of the demand for specialized professionals. Brazilian Business School (BBS), *Instituto Mauá de Tecnologia* and *Trevisan Escola de Negócios* are betting on MBAs with this focus for 2009. "The idea is to provide management tools to executives in the area of sustainability," explains Katherine Schulz, coordinator of BBS.

But with so many new courses in the market, career experts advise executives aiming at high-level jobs never to lose sight of the company as a whole, in order to become good managers. This view is ever more important in an economic crisis scenario.

In this special section, headhunters at recruitment companies such as Career Center, Catho and Michael Page say that now, more than ever, executives need to enhance their competitive edge. Especially considering that cost cuts and possibly layoffs will probably increase competitiveness amongst professionals and that the supply of talents in the market should also rise.

The differentiation may be attained even if professionals have no time to attend regular courses or if they live far from the campus where the courses are being held. Distance learning has already reached the graduate level, with more than 400 courses offered throughout the country.

Sérgio Iesca, designer, decided that this is an opportunity to continue studying. He now dedicates 15 hours per week to the Interactive Media courses at Senac. Iesca would never be able to attend classes in the traditional mode, due to time constraints.

The Ministry of Education is enforcing stricter standards of inspection and assessment of distance courses, and actually closed a few teaching institutions in November.

However, this concern for the quality of the courses will ultimately evidence those courses that may help people grow in their profession.

Besides, academia is a place for the exchange of information and creation of new ideas – some of these ideas may represent the difference between executives who will be able to better protect their companies from the global crisis from those who will deeply suffer their effects. "Listening to what ArcelorMittal's CFO to Europe had to say about the crisis in his particular region proved to be very important in order to understand the problems that may ensue," says Eide Garcia, who attended classes conducted by the steel industry executive during the executive MBA he attended at the University of Pittsburgh, in Prague.

But one must be careful when picking the graduate course. Teresa Dib Zambon Atvars, associate dean for graduate courses at Campinas' State University (Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Unicamp), writes an article with tips on how to make safe decisions; she talks about the best way to check the academic résumé of professors at a given course and how to make sure that a masters or doctorate program is duly certified by the Ministry of Education. She also describes the chief modalities of courses available to professionals who seek to complement their academic background.

(Gazeta Mercantil/Relatório - Page 1)(Carolina Pereira e Luiz Silveira)

How and when to pick the right course during the crisis

São Paulo, December 5, 2008 – When someone decides to embark in a professional graduate course, questions about the type of course and to the best moment to attend it are bound to emerge. Uncertainties are even more prevalent during times of economic uncertainty.

According to headhunters and education experts, however, professionals who have enough resources and feel safe in their positions should also see the financial crisis as an opportunity to expand their knowledge and improve their curriculum's competitiveness.

“Those who can invest in their professional careers right now will stand out and have an advantage over the market in general,” says the new business director at Career Center, Fernando Dias. “The companies are not likely to reduce education requirements due to the crisis,” he adds. According to Dias and other headhunters, professionals would do well to choose their courses carefully, focusing on the subject matters that must be enhanced in order to achieve professional growth.

Carlos Altona, director of the executive recruitment company Michael Page, says that the ideal moment to enroll in an MBA course would be after acquiring some management experience: about five years after starting one's professional life. “If you are under 25, chances are you will gain a lot of theoretical experience, without the possibility of translating it into practical experience,” he explains. According to him, an MBA degree is ever more prevalent in the curriculum of those executives who come to this firm looking for placement. And the companies hold in high regard those courses that focus on hands-on experience, with final papers supported by market executives and actual business cases, duly developed and studied.

Other than MBA, Altona says that there are many specialization courses, or short-term courses –such as finance for non-financiers, for example – which are a valuable addition to a résumé. These courses are also good option for those who are not at the right time in their careers or who do not have resources to attend an MBA.

“I think that in 2009 companies may be less liberal about subsidizing professional education due to the crisis, but I personally do not think this should happen,” he adds. According to this consultant, paying of an employee's MBA is still an intelligent, low-cost investment, which enables indirect increase in pay without added social burdens.

Academic reflections

Altona is not alone when he says that the crisis is an excellent moment to invest in career improvement, both for the individual and for the company. After all, the academic environment is the area that best reflects what is actually happening. “Listening to what ArcelorMittal's CFO to Europe had to say about the crisis in that particular region was very important in order to understand the problems that may ensue,” says Eid Garcia, who attended classes conducted by the steel industry executive during the executive MBA he attended at the University of Pittsburgh, in Prague.

Working as a product manager in the polystyrene department at Dow Chemical for Latin America, Eide Garcia has a degree in Chemical Engineering and started working for the company as a trainee. Today he makes the most of his MBA and expands his view about the market, attending classes with professionals from several areas other than the chemical industry, where he has always worked.

Knowledge degrees

According to Fernando Dias, MBAs have become mandatory when executives get to positions where they do not rely only on their own efforts to reach results; when they rely on the work of other employees under their command.

“For positions below this level, i.e. full and senior analysts, we see a great demand for professionals with specialization courses in the areas where they operate. For managerial levels, however, the requirements are MBA in business management, where one gets a view of the whole picture, above the operating level”, says Dias.

Celso Grisi, Director of Marketing and Institutional Affairs at Fundação Instituto de Administração (FIA) advocates the need for a generalist background, with courses contemplating all areas of business administration.

There are many professionals in management positions who do not have an education in business management," he says. The fact that many professionals attended low-quality schools of business administration at the undergraduate level is another reason why people need a more general education. Thus, these professionals tend to choose graduate courses in the same area as their undergrad, as an upgrade.

But according to Dias, more specific courses are also in great demand, especially in critical industries such as the petrochemical area, or in areas where professionals took a long time to emerge, as in civil construction.

"A generalist is just another professional in the market," argues Antônio Carlos Cabral, course coordinator at the Instituto Mauá de Tecnologia's Lato Sensu Graduate Program, recommending a "deeper approach".

According to Constantino Cavalheiro, director of Catho Educação Executiva, the choice between a more general course or a more specialized one should be made according to the professional's career plan, because "the market needs both generalists and specialists."

The first thing to analyze is how does the course benefit the company I am working for, or the position I want to reach," he explains. Then, according to Cavalheiro, candidates should consider the target public for the course chosen: the professional experience of those enrolled for the course and the companies they work for.

"There is a high investment in time and money, therefore one must choose high-level institutions", says Catho's consultant.

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How to train executives with a global mindset

São Paulo, December 5, 2008 - The growth of emerging countries, as opposed to the stagnation of developed economies, has subverted the corporate world order and requires executives capable of thinking with a global mind, even if their companies operate strictly in the local sphere. This vision has guided Anne Nemer in her management attitude as the director of University of Pittsburgh's Global Executive MBA, one of the best MBA's in the world according to the Financial Times.

A great argument in favor of what Anne's thesis is her own career. Originally from the United States, she came to live in São Paulo, in 1996, with her Brazilian husband, where she got her Pittsburgh MBA. As soon as she finished the course, she was hired by the university as the first director of the institution in Brazil, working full-time. A little later, the model of the course deployed by Anne – strongly based on the education of executives with a global view – was also adopted by the two other MBA headquarters, in Prague (Czech Republic) and Pittsburgh, and she was promoted to general director for all three courses, in 2004.

Answering at times in English, at times in an almost impeccable Portuguese, the executive gave the interview below to Gazeta Mercantil, during her quick visit to São Paulo, on her way to Prague. Anne spends around 100 days of the year outside her homeland.

Gazeta Mercantil - What differentiates Brazil from the other emerging countries you visit?

Brazil has a more mature economy. Many people in the United States already see Brazil as a "middle class" economy, no longer as a developing economy, considering indicators as vehicles ownership, internet access and other aspects.

Gazeta Mercantil - How is this reflected in executive education?

Brazilian executives have been investing in their education for more than 10 years. As a result, today we have more talents in this market than in India, with a population of 1.1 billion people. Today, Brazilian executives are world class. In India, the number of educated professionals is much smaller, but the energy of the youngsters is the same as in Brazil. They want to be part of the economy, make decisions, bring about changes – and they will be successful in all these fronts. Strong will, one of the most remarkable features in Brazil, is also characteristic of Indians.

Gazeta Mercantil - What do Brazilian professionals must further improve?

Some of the most sensitive subjects today--and which deserve to be highlighted-- are probably leadership and a global mentality. In other words: the capacity to understand markets different from the Brazilian one. Understanding opportunities outside the Americas is the great challenge, and I'd especially highlight understanding Asia and Africa.

After all, the US and Europe do differ from Brazil culture-wise but not that much. The challenge is understanding the rest of the world.

Gazeta Mercantil - Should then emerging economies be the focus of an MBA in Brazil, for example?

I believe so. Teaching institutions are facing the challenge of developing curricula to meet the needs of the new emerging realities. The Pittsburgh MBA brings all the content of the best MBA's, but this is not enough today. Where the traditional MBA stops, we go beyond.

Gazeta Mercantil - Comparing Brazilian executives to those of developed countries in this global competitive scenario, do you think the Brazilian multicultural profile is a plus?

No doubt about that. The plural nature of Brazilians is a great plus. But that is not all. The fact that the country went through many challenging realities during the last 20 years made Brazilian executives more prepared to face instability and swift changes—something quite valuable in today's scenario. The different languages and peoples in India also give them an edge. Actually, plural societies, as the ones shaped by immigrants, tend to better understand a multipolar world – and here I would include the Brazilian society, as well as North-American. The disadvantage of countries such as Brazil, the United States and India is the continental character, which may lead people to think that the domestic market is enough for the executives' products and strategies.

Gazeta Mercantil - Have the executives from these countries started to understand this weakness?

I think so. A shoe manufacturer in the South of Brazil, for example, knows that there is no local market any more. The lesson was learned with the arrival of much-cheaper Chinese shoes in Brazil. Today, there is no local market, not even those that apparently have a strictly domestic chain. The construction industry, for example, which operates with local labor, products and suppliers, is now transferring its operating departments – the so-called back offices – to countries such as India, in order to gain competitiveness.

Gazeta Mercantil - How to develop an executive to face this new global reality?

In addition to embarking in a study program which contemplates many subjects with this global approach, and with professors who have a global perspective, executives should take part in global forums organized each year in the three main cities where the MBA is provided. Living and experiencing different cultures is extremely worthwhile.

Gazeta Mercantil - Wouldn't an experience in Asia be missing here?

We are establishing courses in India and in China. In the latter, we should close a deal with the National University of Tsing Hua, which was assigned by the government with the clear task of improving the education of Chinese executives.

Gazeta Mercantil - How is the executive education scenario in China?

China is entering a new development phase. Government there still invests to educate executives in more than 70 domestic companies. Due to the population aging aspect, they must quickly and steeply increase productivity of the economically active population.

Gazeta Mercantil - How much does the University of Pittsburgh's Executive MBA cost?

In Brazil, US\$ 48,500 plus the costs of traveling to Prague and Pittsburgh. In the United States the cost amounts to US\$60 thousand, including traveling expenses to the global forums.

Gazeta Mercantil - What should executives do, if they want to develop a global mentality but cannot pay this amount?

I think that cultural activities may help to understand other countries. Watching films, reading books and keeping contact with foreigners are ways to understand how beliefs, cultures, impact the way people think and do business in other countries. And, obviously, the internet today provides access to all sorts of information, from anywhere in the world.

(Gazeta Mercantil/Report- Page 4)(Luiz Silveira)