

# Some MBA stories



**Damien Blake**  
Winner, 2009 Irish Times  
MBA Scholarship Competition

#### Your background

I started building websites at the age of thirteen, and have worked with businesses and groups across the country for nearly fourteen years. I worked full time through school and university, while earning a BSc degree in E-Business from the University of Ulster. My current job is Digital Media Director of Strawberry Media, a company in the River Media group. I manage all the online activities for River Media's twelve newspapers, and work with external clients ranging from local businesses to national organisations. In 2004, I became the youngest person ever elected to Letterkenny Town Council, where I served a five year term including a year as Mayor.

#### What was your motivation for undertaking the MBA?

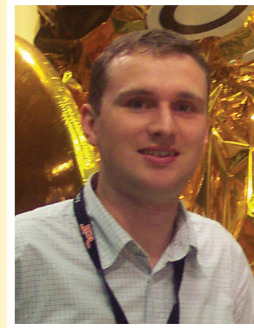
The MBA is a massive opportunity to develop top-class business skills that complement the technical abilities and skills I've picked up through my position as a public representative. I want to build on my past experiences – personal, professional and political and I see the MBA as a way to hone these skills while learning new things from a world-class faculty.

#### Where do you see your MBA taking you?

I really enjoy working in Digital Media and see a lot of growth in the industry. The MBA will give me the skills to identify and develop opportunities for each element of my current role and to manage a team of skilled people to exploit these opportunities. I currently work with people across the River Media group's local offices and see a great future for the company as an employer in a variety of different areas.

#### And why UCD Smurfit School?

The choice was easy, for two reasons. Firstly, UCD Smurfit School has the strongest reputation of any business school in the country, both in terms of the quality of courses and the quality of graduates. Secondly, the structure of the course is perfect for me personally. I can spend a few hours in my office in Letterkenny on Friday morning, attend classes in Dublin on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning and be back in Letterkenny on Saturday evening. I got married this summer, so the ability to balance work, college and a personal life is absolutely vital!



**Colin Goulding**  
Winner, 2009 Irish Times  
MBA Scholarship Competition

#### Your background

I graduated from UCD in 2001 with a masters degree in mechanical engineering focussed on the analysis and optimisation of power stations. Following graduation I set up and ran a small consultancy in Dublin focussed on the energy and IT sectors. In 2003 I was given the opportunity to study in France as part of an international masters program specialising in the management of complex aerospace projects. On completion of this program I was offered a position with the European Space Agency as a systems engineer working on the international Ulysses spacecraft with a team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Los Angeles. I spent the last 5 years performing the engineering analysis and operations to ensure the Ulysses spacecraft successfully completed its third solar orbit. I returned to Ireland in late 2008 and have been working as a consultant in the energy and IT sectors once again.

#### What was your motivation for undertaking the MBA?

My career to date has been focussed on the execution and management of technical work and I hope undertaking an MBA will help me broaden my knowledge and experience of running a complete business.

#### Where do you see your MBA taking you?

I hope that the skills I learn over the next two years will enable me to continue to develop my career in Ireland and internationally. The addition of the business skills from the MBA with my experiences to date will hopefully enable me to lead large complex projects from both a technical and business perspective.

#### And why UCD Smurfit School?

Having researched the options available in Ireland I felt that UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School offers an excellent programme in terms of the strength of the teaching staff and the mix of students from a wide range of backgrounds. Also as an executive MBA I think the choice of locations and times offered by Smurfit give you the flexibility that is required to pursue such a course in addition to working a full time job.

Win an executive MBA scholarship at UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School. The Irish Times and UCD Smurfit School are offering one exceptional candidate the chance to win an MBA worth up to €30,000. You'll find more information in The Irish Times on Friday, January 22nd. Don't miss it.