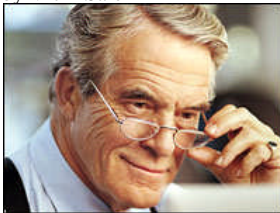


Busy CEOs Recognize the Value of Technology-Fueled Education

by Vicki Salemi



It's easy to appreciate the allure of eLearning -- fitting school into your schedule -- but what do business leaders think of the alternative to brick-and-mortar educational endeavors? For these CEOs, online learning was the key to propelling their professional potential.

"It may also be a great driver of future success," says Paula O'Callaghan, director of Syracuse University's iMBA online program and author of the foreword to *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting Your MBA Online* (Alpine/Penguin, 2005), "One of our recent graduates told me that by earning his iMBA and implementing new ideas, revenues increased by 38 percent, profits by 40 percent. That's an investment result worthy of any CEO's attention."

More and more, the eLearning bug is catching on with high-power players. Just ask Randi Reich, director of Strayer University Online. "Years of workplace experience plays an important role in professional development. However, formal academic training at the bachelor's or master's level for any executive provides the necessary training to gain a competitive advantage in today's global economy."

A Viable and Valuable Education

As the globe-trotting chief executive officer of Prometheus Performance Systems, which provides workforce planning and management, strategic alignment, and organizational governance services, Michael Fritsch admits earning his MBA online wasn't only a viable option; it was his only option.

Take Action

CEO-worthy online degree programs for you to explore:

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"My job was very global in nature with a demanding travel schedule. There was no way I could have earned a degree in a traditional way and performed my work duties." Since most of Michael's travel occurred on short notice and over weekends, a compressed MBA weekend program in technology management wasn't feasible. Neither was taking a two-year hiatus from work to pursue a degree in a traditional classroom. He chose to work toward an MBA from the University of Phoenix Online. "The online option was the only one to support my demanding work and travel schedule."

The educational flexibility wasn't the only advantage. The successful workplace/human resources/operations expert applauds the communication aspects of eLearning, specifically the fact that it mirrors today's business world communication methods of e-mail, Web conferencing, and file exchanges. "Earning an online degree and leveraging technology made for a superior learning experience," notes Michael.

Not to mention that by applying class projects to real work challenges, Michael developed his technological prowess. Solving actual business problems with online colleagues and instructors was especially effective, he adds, "since all collaboration was online."

Navigating Today's Virtual Workplace

Among other things, Tim McMahon, CEO and founder of McMahon Marketing LLC, which specializes in corporate branding and strategic communication, says that eLearning taught him how to better navigate technology in today's rapidly changing world.

"The learning exchange allowed for flexibility with time management while preserving meaningful interchange among my learning team and instructional team members," explains the former head of marketing and communications at a FORTUNE 1000 company.

According to Tim, classes such as Leadership Communication Strategies' and Diversity and Globalization through Seton Hall University's online master of arts in strategic communication and leadership program evoked constructive feedback in an open way. It provided clarity regarding team dynamics in a way that helped his business philosophy.

"Under normal circumstances there are team dynamics to figure out -- getting together, scheduling a meeting time, and understanding roles and strengths. In a virtual environment, I was able to get a better understanding of how teams form, storm, norm and perform."

The Classroom of the World

Master's and MBA students aren't the only execs reaping the benefits of eLearning. For Dr. Sharon T. Freeman, entrepreneur, author, and global change agent who promotes global growth and export development for small, minority, and women-owned enterprises, deciding to earn a Ph.D. in applied management and decision sciences from Walden University was a no-brainer.

"I chose Walden because it's fully accredited and [because of] its mission to prepare social agents," she explains. In fact, the nature of the school's rigorous Ph.D. curriculum lent itself to the savvy businesswoman's schedule; running a global consulting practice. At the time she pursued her degree, she was living in Bosnia (one of more than 100 countries she's worked in), helping develop economic strategy.

"As technology has developed, there are more robust tools used to communicate, and more knowledge about this [online degree] process; it's not an unknown," she explains. Also beneficial was the program's 32-day on-site residency program, which, she says, provided her with a framework of practical experience.

"It's another lens from which to understand the experiences I've already had." In fact, the pioneer hopes to one day help create a new distance learning program

for women in developing countries.