Alumni Network launched

The MBT Alumni Network is now a reality, with an interim steering committee brainstorming the issues and formulating action plans to build a strong alumni community with benefits for all.

The MBT Alumni Network was launched at UNSW's Sydney campus in August. Around 150 MBT participants and graduates attended with a large number indicating they would like to get involved in making the network a success.

An interim steering committee was selected from this group to represent the broadest range of alumni backgrounds and experiences, pending a review scheduled for June 2005. Members of the interim steering committee are: Adam Callender, Ian Dagger, Richard Gow, Sharmila Hegde, Robert James, Simon Kelly, Jennifer Rezek, Helen Rule, Pamela Russell, Daniel Tirado and Stewart Vincent.

All MBT alumni are encouraged to contact individual steering committee members if they have any ideas or expertise to contribute. Nominations and ideas can be forwarded to mbt.network@unsw.edu.au.

“This is the most exciting development since the MBT Program was inaugurated more than 12 years ago,” said recent graduate Ian Dagger, who heads a team of volunteers from the steering committee who are working on online initiatives, including the MBT Online Network and a potential online newsletter.

“The MBT Alumni Online team aims to provide a ‘virtual community’ of MBT graduates regardless of location. We want to foster a strong network and share best practices, knowledge and support to alumni members that will enhance their careers and lives.

Network a ‘forum for active debate’

At the launch on August 24, Terry Davis, CEO of Coca Cola Amatil, said the MBT Alumni Network – one of three UNSW networks launched that day – brought together professionals from diverse industries and roles, and was truly international.

Mr Davis, who flew in from Moscow the same day to be guest speaker for the occasion, said the network would provide a broad community with a good link with government and industry, and a forum for active debate. It would also open up personal development and career development opportunities, but it was ultimately up to individual members to get involved and make it a success.

MBT Executive Director Natalie Kidd said the network would provide the means for everyone in the MBT community to stay in touch and would extend the reputation and recognition of the MBT brand.
Managing for Organisational Sustainability — a challenge for our era

By Course Coordinator Tracy Wilcox, School of Organisation and Management, Faculty of Commerce and Economics

Managing for Organisational Sustainability, the latest addition to the MBT suite of courses, represents a new, exciting and important direction in management education.

Developed as part of the MBT’s commitment to courses that reflect current thinking in key management areas, MOS replaces The Innovative Organisation, which dealt with the ways in which organisational and people management systems, and practices can sustain a culture of innovation and learning.

MOS broadens the scope and encompasses a number of key professional and organisational capabilities needed in business today. We take the view that management education is more than the acquisition of tools and technical skills, and must respond to a key challenge of the millennium: bringing environmental and ethical concerns into the mainstream business and management agenda.

In this respect, Managing for Organisational Sustainability and the MBT course Environmental Management complement each other.

We bear a responsibility for providing our graduates with the awareness, knowledge and ideas needed to create a sustainable future.

Many large global firms have more impact and power than at any time in the past, making it increasingly important to question and reflect on management decisions and organisational practices.

David Gonski, Chair of the Taxation and Philanthropy Working Group in the Prime Minister’s Community Business Partnership, recently observed that business organisations have both the power and the responsibility to work with governments as “engines for social innovation and national development”.

Many of our participants are aspiring or practising managers, often in positions of influence or responsibility. This is a starting point for the course.

UNSW is a signatory to the Talloires declaration, developed in Talloires, France, by an international group of university presidents and vice-chancellors who met to voice their concerns about a sustainable future, and spell out the key actions universities must take to create it. The declaration, signed by more than 300 universities across the world, notes: “Universities educate most of the people who develop and manage society’s institutions.”

We bear a responsibility for providing our graduates with the awareness, knowledge and ideas needed to create a sustainable future.

In Managing for Organisational Sustainability, participants are encouraged to reflect on what it means to be a professional manager, and on the associated responsibilities and duties. We look at the impact of management decisions on all relevant stakeholders, canvassing the unintended as well as intended consequences of these decisions. For example, a typical ‘strategic’ decision to close down a local manufacturing facility in favour of overseas production will be critically evaluated from a number of angles and ethical and environmental considerations brought into the foreground. The course also canvasses the people and organisational capabilities essential to corporate sustainability, as well as the management skills required to be a successful agent of change.

Popular approaches to management tend to focus solely on profit-making organisations and see competitive advantage and shareholder value as the sole objectives. In the course, we explored and participants learn to consider business issues from multiple perspectives. One of the most powerful shapers of management behaviour is an organisation’s performance management system. We investigate the impact of performance indicators in determining what is relevant and important to managers. Participants discuss what happens when short-term financial indicators are considered the only legitimate determinants of managerial and organisational ‘success’. We look at ways of overcoming this barrier to genuine strategic thinking, by reframing performance in broader terms.

At a practical level, participants conduct an action research project in which they evaluate an organisation against sustainability principles and compile a consultant’s report. They consider issues such as people and stakeholder management practices, and make recommendations based on their analysis. For many managers, it will be their first experience in systematically considering the range of stakeholder concerns.

Organisational decision-makers are being increasingly called on to justify their actions as part of calls for a more ‘civil’ (and civilised) society. In this environment, issues like global sustainability, governance and corporate social responsibility are finding a place on the management education agenda. In accepting the professional responsibilities that go with management roles, it is hoped that our graduates will bring a broader understanding of these dimensions of management to their own workplaces.

\[\text{Philanthropy Australia Conference, March 2003}\]
How the new course evolved

Tracy Wilcox, designer and coordinator of the course *Managing for Organisational Sustainability*, says she has long been interested in sustainability.

“My interest in organisational sustainability and effective people management practices stems from my experience as a line manager and research scientist in the chemical manufacturing industry during a time of great change: of tariff reductions, new legislation, a changing IR climate and a growing environmental movement.

“At the time I was constantly frustrated by my own efforts to bring about what I thought were important (and progressive) changes to management systems and work practices. I used to think, ‘If only my team and the rest of the organisation could see things the way I did!’

“It was only when I undertook postgraduate studies here at UNSW that I came to see that many of my problems were due to my own narrow world views. I learned to look at a business situation from different perspectives, and became a more effective manager as a result. This was a period when environmental issues, occupational health and safety, and quality management were all coming into the foreground. They brought home to me the fact that we need to look at the whole spectrum of relationships among the business, the people in it, and a range of other stakeholders if our firm was to remain viable over the long term.”

Some years later Tracy moved into academia, but never forgot the lessons she learnt as a manager. Tracy and her MOS co-writers Craig Tapper and Loretta O’Donnell remain passionate about the need to consider the way we manage organisations in a holistic way. Craig is a veteran MBT leader and has used his experience in both public and private sector management to make him one of the program’s most popular facilitators. Like most MBT participants, Craig has juggled full time work with postgraduate management studies. He has been working in management education for the last five years and continues to work as a management consultant, mostly in the field of strategy, management, marketing and organisational review.

Loretta is well known in the business world for her work in human capital analysis. Loretta and colleague Carol Royal have been taking their qualitative models for evaluating business performance to investment analysts and the financial markets, generating a huge amount of interest. As well as teaching postgraduate management students, she has also been consulting in organisational change in the public and private sectors since 1983. Clients include universities and private schools, professional services firms, and construction and building products companies.

Alumni Network launched

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“We want to be recognised as a premier alumni network within the Faculty and by the University by engaging with current and potential members, the media, the community and industry.

“Send your ideas to idagger@bigpond.net.au.”

Adam Callender, who heads up the social events team is similarly enthusiastic. “Aware of the value of a social program, the steering committee working party have had vigorous discussions about plans for 2005.

“We are looking to have several social events for alumni and students to enjoy, to be held initially in Sydney. We envisage the first 2005 event to take place in early February featuring a guest speaker, with other cities on the agenda.

“The FCE Meet the CEO will continue to be an important part of the MBT Alumni getting together during 2005, as it was this year.

“I’d like everyone to join us in developing the alumni community through our own events.

Contribute your ideas to acallender@optusnet.com.au.
Age no barrier to learning for ‘corporate gypsy” David

“You have to keep yourself relevant in this world,” says food technology consultant David Pullan, 62, who graduated with his MBT this year.

David, a grandfather and MBT’s oldest graduand, loves his work, which takes him around Australia and South East Asia on contract assignments helping manufacturers put pizzazz and profitability into their businesses.

“Much of my consulting work is about helping companies manage change and implement continuous improvement programs including ‘six sigma’ quality initiatives,” he says.

A New Zealander by birth, David studied food technology and worked with Unilever before settling in Brisbane in 1981 and gaining experience managing food manufacturing companies including his own.

“Although I accumulated considerable technical and managerial experience over the years I felt that more was needed to be successful as a consultant in the new millennium. I needed to know more about emerging technologies and bridging the gap between the sciences and commerce.

“I wanted to do postgraduate study, but I had a problem. The problem was time… and the fact that my type of work keeps me on the move – people call me a ‘corporate gypsy’.

“I settled for the MBT because it offered the best blend of courses for my needs and the opportunity to study by distance. It has equipped me with the tools and the confidence to be much more effective in my consulting work. I should also mention the terrific service supplied by the MBT support team.”

MBT reaches out to the world

Once again MBT Graduation Day had a strong international flavour, with graduands from Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Germany, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, Japan, the UK and Australia attending the graduation ceremony and the traditional MBT Graduate Reception in the Scientia Building, UNSW.