



Qualifying success: how an MBA could change your life

● Most clinicians learn about business at the sharp end, but to develop your practice and personal knowledge, an in-depth qualification could truly enhance your strategic business skills.

WHAT DOES THE master in business administration (MBA) offer to qualified veterinary surgeons or practice owners apart from a distinguished set of post-nominal initials?

It is much more than a short course in book-keeping or the rudiments of marketing. The MBA is a highly practical and analytical course that enables personal and professional growth.

Two veterinary surgeons offered *VBJ* the inside track on their experience of the course and gave their perspective on its relevance to veterinary careers.

● **JULIAN SAMUELSON** is a veterinary surgeon based in Kent. He is studying for his EMBA at the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School.

"I am managing partner of the Bell Equine Veterinary Clinic, a 100 per cent equine first opinion and referral practice based in Kent, with 14 vets and a team of nurses and support staff. Together with my partners, I am responsible for the day-to-day management of the practice as well as developing and implementing strategic objectives.

At veterinary school, I received a world-class education. But to the best of my recollection, over the

six-year period, we received just two hours of business training. This is startling given that many of us end up owning and managing our own businesses.

The Cambridge EMBA is a two-year part-time programme. It involves visiting Cambridge once a month, three one-week block modules, including an international study trip, and a substantial amount of home study: around 20 hours a week. Assessment is by way of a number of individual and team assignments, as well as several formal examinations.

Although the course is designed for and targeted at executives in full-time employment, it is a formidable undertaking. There have been times when fitting in home study around my day job has been challenging. However, the faculty is very supportive and every effort is made to assist with the learning process, including the intelligent use of remote learning.

For those unfamiliar with the MBA degree, the core structure consists of modules including accounting, corporate finance, marketing, operations management, strategy, and negotiation. It also provides insights into other more specialist topics.

The Judge EMBA focuses heavily on personal and

team development and, uniquely, includes access to individual executive coaching by independent professionals who are experts in their fields.

The programme also benefits from its association with the University of Cambridge. Each student enrolls in a college and on Friday evenings during the course, a dinner is held at his or her college rounded off with a prestigious guest speaker, attracted, of course, by the university's reputation.

There is an extensive and diverse depth of experience within the class and the ability to share ideas about best practices with a group of similarly motivated professionals is an excellent way to learn new approaches.



JULIAN SAMUELSON
MA VetMB MRCVS graduated from Cambridge University in 1987 and spent two years in mixed practice before moving to the Bell Equine Veterinary Clinic in Mereworth, Kent, in 1989. He became managing partner in 2000 and was appointed a trustee to the Horse Trust in 2011.

So, has it made me better at running a business? Well, it's an incremental process. From day one I learned skills that I could directly apply to my management responsibilities and as the course progresses, the skills gradually combine like pieces of a jigsaw as the overall picture emerges.

The veterinary profession is embarking on a period of unprecedented change and opportunity. The insights and skills that I am gaining from the MBA will help me to be more effective in positioning the business for the challenges ahead, so we can actively participate in helping to shape the future direction of our industry rather than being passive observers."