LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES DESIGNED FOR SUCCESS AT ANY LEVEL

ALEXANDRA SKINNER TALKS TO THE JACK WELCH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Q. In regards to the wider MBA market, is enough emphasis given to the development of leadership skills?

Bottom line, businesses are looking for skilled employees who can lead people. Yet, employers regularly cite soft skills as the biggest gap in hiring. A recent LinkedIn survey[1] reported that leadership, communication, and collaboration are the most reported in-demand soft skills sought by companies for mid-to-senior level positions.

"Many people have technical competencies and strong business acumen, but they lack the basic people management and communication skills needed to get ahead and affect real change in organisations."

Many business schools focus on theory, research, and quantitative and technical reasoning but don't give the same weight to leadership and soft skills. Our students learn critical lessons often overlooked by traditional business education such as hiring the right people, building great teams, managing conflict and developing an executive presence.

Jack Welch, who *Forbes* named one of the "World's 100 Greatest Business Minds," built JWMI's entire MBA programme using practical leadership insights from companies and business leaders he consults with around the world. Jack's involvement with the school ensures that our curriculum bridges what companies want in the workplace and the education students receive, ensuring leadership training is part of JWMI's DNA.

Even when it comes to more technical subjects such as finance, students are taught to think from a CEO mindset, even if a position in the C-suite is not their end goal. For example, in an accounting course at JWMI, you won't just learn about debits and credits; you will also comprehend the importance of variance analysis, a tool a CEO would utilise to identify opportunities and prioritise resources.

Developing leadership skills within an MBA programme is not as simple as opening a book, it takes practice and application. At JWMI, we are very proud that 95% of our students graduate stating their confidence as a leader has grown while enrolled.[2]

Q. Leadership has become a buzzword in job descriptions and on MBA curriculums. In your view, what does leadership mean in regards to the workplace, and how is it woven into JWMI's curriculum?

Leadership is different from management. Managers get predictable things done predictably. Leaders inspire action and adaptability in an unpredictable world.

A leader in any organisation must be able to build great teams to achieve results. Thus, understanding who to hire and how to evaluate and coach are skills every organisation should demand from its leaders. People development should be a daily event, not relegated to the annual review process.

But that is just the beginning of a leader's role. Leaders must not only set the vision but also ensure that the entire organisation lives and breathes it. And then align reward

systems to that vision, celebrating every win along the way. Leaders must exude energy every day themselves, and at the same time, possess the authenticity needed to energise others. Executive presence is paramount for all leaders who must communicate throughout different levels of the organisation. Leaders need to create an environment where trust and transparency are valued, using candor as a tool to get every brain in the game. Lastly, leaders have to execute to deliver financial and operating results. They need the edge to make decisions and avoid drowning in information. Leaders understand that experimentation drives growth and results and encourage smart risks from their teams.

JWMI's curriculum is grounded in these principles. JWMI's first course, Leadership in the 21st Century, lays out Jack Welch's time-tested and proven techniques for high-performance team leadership and begins a leadership journey that focuses on topics such as emotional intelligence, team motivation, managing conflict, leading change, and eliciting support from colleagues and managers.

Like building blocks, each course builds upon the other; in Business Communications and Executive Presence, we delve into the importance of trust, transparency and using candor to advance your leadership presence and professional relationships. In People Management, students learn how to hire and position the right players for organisational needs and manage people once the players are in place. In Organisational Change and Culture, students learn a framework for understanding and marshaling change using concrete strategies from the trenches—including Work-Out, Rapid Results, and Six Sigma.

More than just the leadership lessons though, it is the practical application of these concepts and the business fundamentals they gain in courses like Marketing and Economics that have the most significant impact on our students. As students apply the theories within their careers, they start to build confidence and find great career success.

Q. Many of your students have enjoyed pre-MBA successes in their careers, securing promotions and senior level positions along the way. Why, therefore, do they need JWMI?

> "Good people never think they've reached the top of their game. But they're dying to get there!"
>
> *Jack Welch*

Just as a business needs to evolve to meet the ever-changing demands of the business cycle, so do individuals. Complacency and stagnation have no place within an effective leader. A person with an intense intellectual curiosity for different roles, economies, or industries will be better equipped to manage uncertainties and spot growth opportunities.

Many JWMI students are high achievers in senior roles looking for more: more responsibility, more leadership opportunities, and more success.

So, if you are already a top performer, who else would you turn to learn from if not one of the greatest CEOs of all-time, Jack Welch? As an active Executive Chairman for our programme, Jack consistently challenges decisions and asks tough questions, not only to learn but to help elevate the experience and outcomes for our students. Jack is naturally curious, and meets regularly with students and staff to understand what we can do to improve the programme and the JWMI environment, and holds the executive team accountable for acting on these suggestions. Similarly, our curriculum challenges students to probe and push their way of thinking, to identify areas of opportunity, and to regularly seek new solutions.

Q. What fuels the success your students have in the workplace during, and after, the programme?

Regardless of career stage or industry, JWMI students share a common trait: they want to help their companies and teams win, and view improving their leadership skills as the catalyst. And winning is contagious.

The entire MBA programme is built to deliver practical business and leadership skills that students can start to apply from the very first week. This commitment to practicality—which we call our "Learn on Monday. Apply on Tuesday." philosophy—works. Two out of three students in the programme receive a promotion or raise while enrolled.[3] Thus, students don't wait until graduation to see the impact of studies on their careers.

Throughout the programme, and beyond, our students learn how to put decisions into action and push them forward to completion, through resistance or unexpected obstacles. They learn how to drive results, and the satisfaction that they see in developing themselves and, more importantly, others is infectious.

Being part of a winning team, succeeding personally and helping others to achieve greatness is fuel for even more exciting outcomes long after you are done with your MBA.

Please expand upon the following: The JWMI MBA feels like an 'MBA-plus' in that the programme goes beyond the nuts and bolts of the traditional MBA.

Only one MBA programme is built around the management and business practices of one of the most iconic CEOs of all time. As Executive Chairman, Jack Welch helps to elevate the programme to new heights, disrupting the conventional business education model built more around theory, research and tenure than practicality and student satisfaction.

At JWMI, we run our school the way we would run a business. Most business schools may teach the best business practices, but they don't actually practice them.

For one, we employ differentiation, not tenure. We hire passionate executives from top companies around the world based on their ability to engage and mentor students. Faculty are evaluated quarterly against a mission-based charter they created, and from student feedback. We reward and promote based on this framework, not length of employment.

Similarly, we also evaluate our courses each term and implement changes to the programme to drive even greater student outcomes and success. Success is achieved as students synthesise what they learn and apply that towards the real-life assignments in their workplace.

Just as the best businesses are built around their customers, JWMI is built around the demands of our students. We understand that our students are working adults with constant demands on their schedule between work, family, and life, and they demand a return on their time and financial investments. Thus, we go beyond what is expected from an MBA programme by delivering the highest value to our students. Both our leadership curriculum and faculty are top-ranked for this reason, and our Net Promoter Score has averaged over 80 for the past two years

Q. Senior roles require an entirely different interpersonal skill set. How do you help your students make the leap?

At JWMI, we teach the leadership and executive presence skills often reserved for the C-suite. Why? Because leaders are needed at every level within an organisation. And it's never too early in anyone's career to learn good leadership practices and communication skills.

So, while more senior roles may require different competency levels for interpersonal skills, like communication, we want to ensure that each student is equally given all the tools to succeed. Those tools include personal assessments that are used in the workplace, but that we incorporate into the classroom in the very first course. A behavioral self-assessment like DiSC®, conflict self-assessment like the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI), and the emotional intelligence assessment showcase leadership gaps and reinforce strengths. After all, how can you lead if you don't know what type of leader you are?

With the tools in hand, students are asked to apply what they are learning. For example, in our People Management class, students complete a performance review. They learn to have tough, candid conversations, to be open to feedback, to share what they love about an employee, and to identify areas of improvement in both performance and behaviors.

We view the classroom as the forum to practice these interpersonal skills, to make mistakes and grow, all within a supportive environment, and with faculty members and classmates cheering them on.

Q. The very best schools in the world have made leadership and interpersonal skills a priority. Is this what separates JWMI from the competition, in addition to having Jack Welch as your Executive Chairman?

Our leadership curriculum and Jack Welch's participation and integration within our programme are unique. What sets JWMI apart from other schools, though, is our prescriptive approach to curriculum design. Other programmes allow students to select from a list of courses and still graduate with the same degree.

Our philosophy is that if you want to be a leader, you need to complete a series of classes that prepare you to lead with confidence. Each course builds on the next, adding both leadership and business acumen skills to our students' toolkits. To ensure we are aligned with the demands of today's employers, we continue to speak with top executives, like Warren Buffett, who share insights on our classes. For example, we added "Executive Presence" to the content of our Business Communications course when both Jack and Warren shared that it is the number one interpersonal skill set you need as a successful leader. Based on this feedback, this class is more than just papers, memos, and video presentations; it teaches students how to authentically communicate and engage at all levels and break down complex topics in a practical way.

In addition to sharing insights, dozens of those same C-suite executives are also woven into the online classroom in our exclusive Expert of Practice (EOP) series. The series allows students to learn proven leadership from those leading some of the world's best

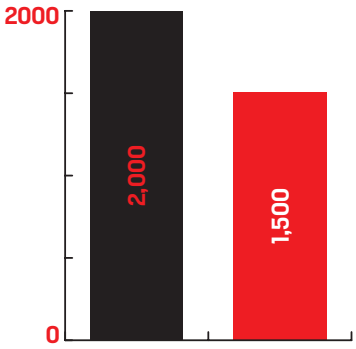
BIOGRAPHY
Founded by celebrated business leader Jack Welch and infused with his singular insights, the Jack Welch Management Institute seeks to transform the lives of students by providing them with the tools they need to become better leaders, build great teams, and help their organisations win. JWMI was recently named a top-ranked online MBA programme by the Princeton Review, *CEO Magazine*, and Top MBA, as well as ranked #1 in Student Satisfaction with the Ability to Apply What you Learn to Your Job by Poets & Quants, a leading graduate school publication.

companies, including Berkshire Hathaway, Netflix, Starbucks, Medtronic, Sam's Club, Boeing, Marriott, McDonald's and many other global organisations.

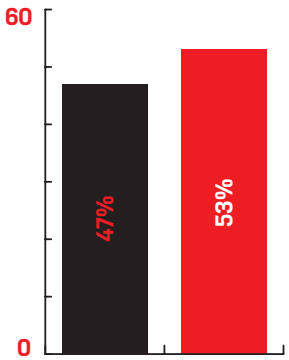
This set MBA course path, the constant evaluation of our courses, and the content within it ensure that we consistently deliver an MBA experience our students can use to get ahead.

Q. Students often learn as much from their peers as they do from faculty. With this in mind, kindly expand upon the makeup of your students, and applicants.

JWMI boasts a diverse student population of people around the world who love business and are hungry to grow as leaders. In our online environment, students have a unique opportunity to share ideas with executives, managers, entrepreneurs, and individual contributors across many industries and geographies, in different stages of their careers, and who represent some of the top companies in the world like Amazon, Disney, Cleveland Clinic, NASA, Wells Fargo, ExxonMobil, and more.



2,000+ enrolled students and 1,500+ alumni



47% Female, 53% Male

JWMI Student and Alumni Profile

Average Age:
39

Average Years of Experience:
14

International:
16%

Nationalities:
32

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> "We go beyond what is expected from an MBA programme by delivering the highest value to our students."

A small class size of fewer than 20 students allows faculty to dedicate time to each student and for meaningful exchanges between students through a unique peer-to-peer learning experience that provides an opportunity for continuous learning no matter your title.

Our community is fostered through our Student & Alumni Advisory Board (SAAB), charged with helping to support student success, including networking events hosted in cities all over the world, including Sao Paulo, London, Dubai, Toronto, New York, Atlanta and Chicago... Our newly launched online student and alumni portal allows students to join virtual networking groups tailored to their personal interests in areas including marketing, business development and accounting, and connect with others in their local cities.

Sources:
[1] https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2018/the-most-in-demand-hard-and-soft-skills-of-2018
[2] 2018 Graduate survey: 391 survey respondents among 407 JWMI students surveyed during the final term of their programme
[3] 66% of students; Based on 1,214 survey respondents among 1,281 JWMI students surveyed during the final quarter of their programme between January 2015 and December 2018
[4] Data as of Spring 2019