

STRONG ACADEMIC FOCUS

Despite already being equipped with two master's degrees in marketing and communications, Andrew Hui, Greater China general manager of pharmaceutical firm ALK-Abello, decided he wanted an academic programme that could enrich and strengthen his professional knowledge. He was quickly attracted to the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) DBA (doctor of business administration) programme.

"I was initially attracted to the programme because of its reputation of enabling executives from a business background to conduct high-level research," says Hui, a recipient of the Outstanding CityU DBA Alumni Award. "Every part of the programme, from the study experiences, developing analytical and critical thinking skills, and knowledge sharing with CityU faculty and classmates, exceeded my expectations," adds Hui, who joined the programme in 2011. "One of the important components of the DBA programme is developing the skills that allow you to put your

thoughts and research ideas in order, so you think like a researcher instead of a businessman," he adds, who was also the recipient of the 2015 CityU DBA Graduation with Distinction Award.

Importantly for Hui, the DBA programme provided him with the opportunity to explore fresh ideas and research solutions to solve a real-life business problem, one that he had noticed through his professional capacity working in the pharmaceutical industry. "Over the years I noticed a trend that despite doctors providing their patients with the correct prescriptions and good advice, there was often a lack of trust," explains Hui.

After defining his research proposal with the help of CityU professors, Hui recalls the next step: developing the research skills and methodologies needed to apply theoretical understanding through independent research. "Some of the highlights of the programme I experienced during those first couple of years were how to ensure my research would be relevant to the specific topic that puzzled me," explains Hui.

Along the way, Hui discovered while fellow learning partners came from different industry backgrounds, the problems they were hoping to solve often shared similarities. "The trust issue between a banker and a client is similar to that between a doctor and a patient," says Hui.

He adds that discussions with learning partners were insightful and provided valuable perspectives while conducting his research.

"The structure of the programme encourages you to really drill down into your area of research to produce a thesis that stands up to evaluation," says Hui. Describing his DBA journey as demanding, challenging but rewarding, as a busy executive whose time is of great importance, Hui did a lot of writing and research-related

work while he was travelling. At times, he was actually grateful when his flights were delayed.

To test his hypotheses, Hui distributed 1,500 questionnaires to patient groups in 24 hospitals located in 20 cities of 14 provinces across the mainland. One of Hui's key findings was the amount of time a doctor spent with a patient during the first consultation had a direct impact of the level of trust generated. With doctors working in mainland public hospitals expected to keep consultations brief, Hui's research also revealed that if nurses or other health workers engaged with



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patients, the level of trust could be improved. Following the publication of his research, a hospital that had changed its engagement processes with its parents sent Hui a letter of application. "I can't claim my research has resulted in huge life-changing events, but I am proud and satisfied that my curiosity has led to some incremental improvements, says Hui modestly. His advice to potential DBA candidates is to ensure their motivation comes from something you are passionate about, and strongly believe in to the extent that research can make a difference.



Andrew Hui