

Learning to think like an academic benefits business

One lesson Dr Bernhard Bengler learned early in the first year of the City University (CityU) College of Business DBA programme was to keep asking the question, “Why should I believe you?”

That mindset was essential when assessing any research materials and written sources to ensure that no comment, opinion, or item of information was accepted at face value, or without proper scrutiny.

“We were told to take nothing for granted and check everything very critically,” says Bengler, the CEO and managing director for German firm MiVEG GmbH.

“This rigorous approach to doing things may sound simple, but it requires some practice and, at first, it can be hard to execute. But it is definitely important, and you come to see how worthwhile it can be in other aspects of everyday life.”

The work for Bengler’s thesis centred on a theoretical and practical analysis of the adoption rate of cloud computing.

His research encompassed technological, organisational

and environmental aspects, with clear practical implications for the many organisations now taking this step.

“My research dealt with the decision-making process of IT managers and chief information officers when it comes to the adoption cloud technology,” Bengler says.

“It considered different influencing factors, including the type of company, the environment in which it does business, and the technical elements.

“On top of that, it also took account of the client, provider or integrator, and government perspectives, which brought something special,” he says.

Bengler originally planned to take an EMBA, but after discussions with the CityU College of Business team, he came to realise that the research-based DBA was a better fit for what he aimed to achieve.

His aim was to add academic credentials to his wealth of professional experience, and to provide meaningful insights for others in his sector.



Dr Bernhard Bengler says the CityU DBA taught him not to take research findings and opinions at face value.

“You start with a lot of motivation and the will to change the world,” he says.

“But you learn pretty quickly you can’t address all the issues and then narrow down your field of research. That was tough to do, but reducing the scope is a way to increase quality.”

During the process, Bengler discovered the pain of having to discard findings which turned out to be superfluous.

What’s more, he had to overcome the natural human

tendency to underestimate the amount of work involved, and the time needed to do it.

“The DBA is an academic journey which requires time and stamina,” Bengler says.

“But learning how to work as an academic is an achievement in itself. The approach, the way of thinking, and the rigorous method of questioning things all become part of your DNA.”

It was a great help, he says, to have the support of peers as well as professors and supervisors.

They challenged his thinking and suggested alternative theories, or other avenues to explore, to him.

“You must expect to re-evaluate, review and rework things as you progress towards the final thesis,” Bengler says.

“But this ‘spiral’ approach enhances your work and certainly leads to improvements.

“A nice side-effect is that it also leads to new friendships with a pretty international group of classmates,” Bengler says.