

AN IMPORTANT CAREER STEP



Barry Lee

At the core of the CityU DBA is the focus on conducting high-quality research. This enables students to not only improve their business acumen, but find practical solutions to workplace problems.

For example, CityU DBA graduate Dr Barry Lee, director at ATAL Engineering, says the programme helped to transform him from a professional engineer to an all-rounded person with rich knowledge in handling business development and management matters.

“Studying for my DBA with CityU equipped me with the learning and research skills which allowed me to enter the ‘world of knowledge’ necessary for future sustainable professional development,” says Lee.

Furthermore, because of his DBA experience, his ability to navigate business and technical challenges has been strengthened. “The programme broadened my vision and reinforced my confidence, which enables me to approach unprecedented situations in a different, but structured way,” says Lee.

When he joined the CityU DBA programme over five years ago, Lee says he was immediately impressed by three defining features: the DBA’s global recognition and status, the programme’s spiral approach

which involves increasing complexity to reinforce progressive learning, and the encouragement to use a personal, real-life business problem as the topic for research. Based on personal experience, Lee’s research is entitled “Motives and Factors Affecting the Firm Internationalisation: Evidence from Hong Kong Engineering Companies”.

“I wanted to find out why, when using some defined parameters, some attempts by Hong Kong engineering companies to diversify or expand their business outside of Hong Kong succeed, and others fail,” Lee says.

Findings from the qualitative phase of the study indicate the



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GLADYS LAM

importance of the decision maker’s characteristics, social capital and technological capability. Lee says the journey of conducting this research has enhanced his overall critical thinking ability.

He is now able to better perceive and understand business situations, and from a broader perspective. “Instead of ending a journey when I completed my DBA, the experience has taught me I have a lot more to explore in the wide world of business knowledge,” says Lee.

Echoing similar thoughts, Outstanding CityU DBA Graduate Award recipient Dr Gladys Lam says that completing her DBA has been the fulfilment of a lifelong dream.

“Achieving my doctorate is something I have always wanted to do and an achievement I will always treasure,” says Lam, adding that obtaining her doctorate designation from one of the highest-ranked DBA programmes in the world was especially rewarding.

“Studying with top professors at CityU, you learn what constitutes good research, the demands of conducting good research, and how to formulate a relevant hypothesis based on validity,” Lam says. Being part of a cohort of students who are curious and looking to further their knowledge for the benefit of society was another highlight for her.

With a background as a senior executive in the advertising industry before joining the academic sector as a university lecturer, Lam says the rigorous research discipline she undertook for her DBA thesis enabled her to broaden her perspective.

“Instead of looking at my area of research from a horizontal industry viewpoint, I took a vertical approach to find deeper meaning,” she says. Her research, entitled

“Photographs or Illustrations? Visual Concreteness and Psychological Distance Effects in Print Advertising”, investigates why, in some cases, illustrations are used in preference to photographs.

Her research findings revealed that illustrations can provide a psychological buffer if the advertising message is complex or disturbing.

Although Lam has won many advertising industry awards both locally and internationally, she says presenting her DBA research findings at the American Academy of Advertising Global Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, as well as having her research documented for industry practitioners to read, was a major career highlight.

Offering advice to potential DBA candidates, Lam stresses the reasons for joining the demanding programme have to be sufficient in order to justify the hard work and personal sacrifice required.

“It is not an easy journey, but it is a rewarding one,” concludes Lam.



Gladys Lam