

The CSU EMBA module - diary entries from Berne

by Professor Mark Farrell

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Background

The module “Doing Business in Europe” is a program of the University of Applied Sciences, (UASB) Berne, Switzerland. CSU has an arrangement with UASB whereby CSU MBA students can undertake this module and receive credit for one subject in the CSU MBA.

Sunday 7/8/05

Day of Arrival – 21 MBA students descended on Zurich Airport, arriving from Australia and the Netherlands. A small number took the opportunity to do some sightseeing / shopping in London and Paris before their arrival. One of the students traveled from Holland to Berne by train, booking the tickets on the Internet. Unfortunately there is also a Berne in Germany, and yes, you guessed it! Some 800kms later, at the Berne in Switzerland, one tired student was relieved to finally arrive at the Hotel, with a story to tell.

Monday, 8/8/05

The first day began with Jacqueline Ducret, Assistant for MBA/DBA Programmes at UASB, meeting us at the Hotel and joining us for a short walk to the classroom. The Hotel was in a perfect location; five minutes walk to the classroom and 10 minutes walk from the University of Applied Sciences, Berne.

Professor Alexander Jungmeister gave a warm welcoming speech to the students, and provided an overview of the course. Professor Mark Farrell thanked Alexander and Jackie for organising the program. Then followed a lecture on “Cultural diversity and Business in Europe” by Dr Beda Bischof, Head of Intellectual Property Search, Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property. This was a great introduction to the course, and provided a real insight into the issues concerning different business cultures.

Following lunch, Dr Daniel Wüger, Senior Research Fellow of the World Trade Institute (www.wti.org) gave an overview of EU institutions and the Switzerland legal system. Dr Wüger’s expertise, combined with his ability to explain complex issues, made a difficult subject enjoyable, and helped keep awake those students suffering from jet lag.

Tuesday, 9/8/05

Dr Mathias Völker (www.voelkerlaw.ch) presented a highly interactive session on setting up a company and business interest in Europe. This session required students to work in teams, analyse a scenario and present a solution(s). Many students commented on the valuable insight learned and greatly appreciated the knowledge and experience of Dr Völker.

Wednesday, 10/8/05

In the morning, Dr Markus Käeser (<http://www.ubfs.ch/index.php?site=37>) provided an excellent lecture on Macroeconomics in Europe and Competitiveness. Following lunch, Professor Jungmeister took us to the Paul Klee Museum nearby, http://www.paulkleezentrum.ch/ww/en/pub/web_root.cfm.

Paul Klee is a famous German artist living in Switzerland with deep impact on Europe’s culture, whose works are replete with allusions to dreams, music, and poetry. Klee was a

banned artist through the Hitler regime in Germany and had to flee the country, illustrating so an important period of history for Europe, and still shaping the environment of today. The museum is a brand new building, opened in June 2005, and designed by the world famous architect Renzo Piano. Following a very interesting guided tour of a selection of the works of Paul Klee, we then spent two hours where we had the opportunity to meet leading Swiss business people who are graduates of the Executive MBA at UASB. A two hour forum provided an excellent opportunity for an exchange of ideas and insight into the respective business cultures and the challenges/opportunities of conducting business in Europe and Australia.

Following this session, Alexander entertained the group with a formal dinner in what is probably the leading restaurant in Berne, if not Switzerland. This provided further opportunities for all parties to network and develop potential business relationships. Some of the CSU DBA students who are studying the CSU DBA in conjunction with UASB were able to join us, including Marc Peter, Head of Marketing for Ebay, Austria and Switzerland, (www.ebay.at / www.ebay.ch).

Marc gets a special mention because he has actually been to the Bathurst campus to study part of his DBA and he also helped to organize the PostFinance visit. This was truly a memorable evening and was greatly appreciated by the CSU group.

Thursday, 11/8/05

We departed the hotel around 8.30 am and headed to Zurich by coach. Around 90 minutes later we were entering the International Headquarters of Credit Suisse, <http://www.credit-suisse.com/en/home.html>

We were fortunate to be seated in the boardroom of one of the worlds leading financial institutions. The accompanying photograph shows the wonderful style and grandeur of this institution. There then followed two fascinating presentations by Directors Toni Scheiwiller and Hans Leupbach. The presentations offered a unique insight into the operations of a major financial institution. All of the group were most grateful for the excellent hospitality shown by Credit Suisse, and were most appreciative of the senior members sharing their day with us.



The remainder of the day enabled us to see some of the sights of Zurich, rated as one of the world's most livable cities (www.mercer.com). One of the students (who will remain nameless) bought a pair of shoes reduced from 450 Swiss francs to 99 – who says the Aussies can't spot a bargain!). Two other students took the opportunity to open a Swiss Bank Account with Credit Suisse, while one other went missing, and ended up catching the train back to Berne.

Friday, 12/8/05

A short drive into the city centre of Berne and we were at the Headquarters of PostFinance (www.postfinance.ch) in the banking section of Swiss Post which has over 2 million customers, including over 300,000 companies relying of their financial services. Senior members of Post Finance gave presentations on the corporate strategy of PostFinance, marketing strategy, the marketing strategy towards the youth market and an overview of the financial payment system. This included a brief tour of the area which processes up to

40,000 payment slips per hour. The presentations were delivered by Martin Hügli, Head of Market Management, Markus Schawalder – Strategy Leader and Urs Krecht.

The remainder of the afternoon was free time with many of the students heading into the shops to stimulate the local economy.

Saturday, 13/8/05

This was a 'free' day allowing students the opportunity to undertake their own sightseeing. Students went to a number of places, including Germany. A number of intrepid explorers managed to visit Gruyere, famous for its cream making (important to see for some students from the Dairy industries), and by all accounts, had a fantastic day. The Sub Dean MBA, met the Dean of the Faculty and his wife, and went on a short bicycle ride, which went longer than expected. Unlike Lance Armstrong, we thought it only wise to stop for some liquid refreshments after a couple of kilometres. Also unlike Lance, we realised only too late, the need for sturdy shorts when on a razor like saddle.

Sunday, 14/8/05

Sightseeing visit to Schilthorn and boat trip to Thun.

Alexander and Jackie met us at the Hotel around 8.30am and we departed by coach on a sightseeing tour. First stop was a trip up a mountain. Schilthorn is 2970 metres high. To get to the peak takes 32



minutes, via three separate cable car rides. From the top the views are simply stunning and can be seen from the accompanying photographs. Schilthorn is also famous for being part of the James Bond movie, 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service', starring George Lazenby, the only Australian to play James Bond. Click on <http://www.schilthorn.ch/>

After the trip to the mountain, we went on a coach to the lake where we had a boat ride to Thun, a charming old town with many cafes, bars, and shops. Students also rode a ten-seater bike to demonstrate the art of leadership, teamwork, and free-loading, all at the same time!

Monday, 15/8/05

Monday morning commenced with a lecture on issues in Global Marketing and Marketing of High Technology products by Dr Pavel Kraus. Dr Kraus has over twenty years of experience working for Roche Pharmaceuticals in a number of roles, including marketing research and corporate communications.

After lunch we boarded a bus and drove to Basel for a site visit to the headquarters of Roche Pharmaceuticals, <http://www.roche.com/home.html>

During the visit, we went on a guided tour of the manufacturing plant, seeing how the many different pharmaceuticals are made and packaged. We also had the opportunity to see mobile robots in a fully automated factory, traversing the factory floor delivering packages. One of

the robots appeared to be take quite a fancy to one of the female students, who screamed and jumped out of the way as it came in her general direction.

Senior managers of Roche delivered a fascinating presentation on the history of Roche and the overall corporate strategy. This was followed by a unique insight into the marketing of Roche products and services by Nick Smith, New Business Development Manager. The visit was enjoyed by everyone and afforded us a glimpse into the marketing of high tech products and services from the experts in the pharmaceutical industry. The whole afternoon was superb and Roche were kind enough to give each student a stylish credit card version of the Swiss army penknife, to commemorate the occasion.

Tuesday, 16/8/05

Much to my surprise all of the students managed to get up early in time for the 5.30 am bus departure. (My surprise is due to the manner in which our students contributed to the local Berne economy during the evening!)

The three and a half hour journey to the headquarters of Daimler Chrysler, <http://www.daimlerchrysler.com/dccom>

in Stuttgart, Germany, gave everyone the opportunity to catch up on some sleep.

Our first visit was to the factory that manufactures the A Class Mercedes. We were warmly greeted by the staff, and taken into the Consumer reception area. This was a very large showroom displaying several models, and other related Mercedes merchandise. Following a video presentation we then drove to the factory. We were guided along an overhead walkway and taken through the manufacturing process in building the A-Class. What became very obvious was the incredible attention to detail, the obsessive focus on quality, and the importance of occupational health and safety in an environment which includes large, powerful robots. The time to build each A-Class is 18 hours from start to finish. Each car is individually customised on the production line with only two cars out of 100,000 being made identical.

We then drove to the Daimler Chrysler Headquarters where Dr Maria Friae gave a presentation on the marketing strategy on the new B-Class (not yet available in Australia) and Mr Frank Zimmerman gave a presentation on the marketing strategy for the R-Class, which is a new compact Sports Tourer. The presentation included an opportunity to sit in and experience the cars. Needless to say, everyone was very impressed with most students now placing Mercedes firmly in their choice set. The entire visit was superbly hosted by Mr Ambrose Kluyskens, Foreign Liaison Officer, Sales and Customer Events. Following some refreshments we headed to the Daimler Chrysler Museum where we saw the first ever motor car and a wide variety of Mercedes Benz vehicles from the early 1900's to today's models. Everyone agreed that the entire day was a fantastic learning experience and, indeed, a privilege to hear from the experts in automobile engineering.

Wednesday, 17/8/05

Back in the classroom Dr Nicholas Koechlin delivered a fascinating lecture on Taxation issues in Switzerland and the EU, which gave students an insight into how to set up tax efficient business structures.

Night time was spent with students in study groups preparing for the exam which was to be held the next day.

Thursday, 18/8/05

Dr Mathias Völker delivered classes on the challenge of EU expansion in Eastern Europe and Dr Völker encouraged students to actively participate in class, requiring presentations, etc, leaving no room for any passengers! Fortunately, all of the students enjoyed his style and certainly appreciated his teaching methodology.

Later, students sat the final exam for the subject.

Later on in the afternoon, Alexander and I sat down to mark the exam papers. This was the last evening of the course, so Alexander had organised a farewell dinner at Bechburg Castle, <http://www.neu-bechburg.ch/start.asp>

On the drive over to the castle, we informed the students that the exams had been marked, and that everyone has passed. There then erupted an almighty roar, which told us that there was trouble ahead if the Castle had run out of beer! Fortunately, preparations for the evening were already underway. Katharina Jungmeister and Eva Kraus, had decorated the entire dining room, and entry to the Castle. Candles were placed on each step of a winding staircase taking us into the magnificent dining room. The dining tables were festooned with decorations, creating a marvelous atmosphere.

This evening was heavy with rain as a large thunderstorm made its way across the surrounding landscape. Professor Cuno Wüthrich, Head Postgraduate Education at UASB gave a warm welcoming speech. Professor Christoph Gloor, Head of the Management Centre at UASB was also in attendance to welcome the students.

The meal was a European style barbeque, with all cooking done by a Swiss Chef. To show their appreciation of the programme, the students presented Jacqueline Ducret with a signed and framed photograph of the entire group, taken outside Daimler Chrysler HQ. Alexander was presented with an authentic didgeridoo. Unfortunately, he was unable to play it, so we look forward to hearing him next year. I was presented with a Paul Klee print and a book celebrating the works of Paul Klee. One of the MBA students, Reece Kershaw, was particularly envious, as he showed a real enthusiasm for modern art, in particular, the works of Paul Klee.

On the return journey to the Hotel, there was plenty of singing from the back seats of the bus. The older members of the group retired around midnight, with the remainder continuing the celebrations, and returning around 5 a.m.

Friday, 19/8/05

Alexander provided a 'wrap up' session of the program. All students were presented with a Certificate of completion of the module. Everyone shook hands, bade their farewells, and promised to keep in touch. Great friendships were established, and the feedback was positive.

Overall Summary

The entire course was a fantastic opportunity for Australian students to learn first hand, through classes and site visits, and meetings with Swiss business people. All of the lecturers put in a good deal of effort to ensure their material was relevant. Thanks are also due to Judy Wong who coordinated the administration in Australia, and Jacqueline Ducret, who did a splendid job in Switzerland. Special thanks to all of the companies and their staff who were most generous in sharing their time with us, and for providing such wonderful hospitality. Thanks also to Eva Kraus and Katharina Jungmeister for their superb efforts in decorating the Dining room in the Castle for the farewell dinner. Thanks to Professor Cuno Wüthrich, and Professor Christoph Gloor, for their support for the program, and generous hospitality. Finally, on behalf of all of the students, a special mention and thanks to Alexander Jungmeister. Alexander went to great lengths to ensure that everything went smoothly, which meant long days and not much rest for him.

Based on the success of the program, we plan to offer a similar program in Berne next year. We are also exploring options to offer a module on 'Doing Business in China' next year, in conjunction with the University of Applied Sciences Berne, and a leading Chinese University.

Feedback from CSU MBA students who attended the European Business Module.

- “It was a truly memorable experience...exceeded our expectations...these site visits and contacts we made are unforgettable. The interaction with others in Switzerland and other students – fabulous. The outings were exceptional. The quality of the CSU MBA program is remarkable and with courses being offered such as this, the quality and reputation is enhanced.”
Keri Murray, HR Manager – Training & development, Fluor Daniel B.V. (Engineering and construction) The Netherlands.
- “A program that encompassed academic and “hands on” learning with the opportunity to meet European business people and to visit numerous world renowned businesses...the program overall exceeded my high expectations. Don't let the opportunity pass you by. An outstanding exposure to European business and culture and access to outstanding Swiss business leaders. Thank you.”
Wes Maxwell, Manager, Port Phillip City Council – Melbourne Australia Building Surveying.
- “Grab it with both hands”
Mark Marshall, Process Improvement Officer , Queensland State Development.
- “A great life experience that provides you with opportunities that you wouldn't normally have access to in Europe if you were to undertake independently.”
Greg Caust, Executive Manager, Commonwealth Bank – Finance.
- “The entire program had an excellent mix of theory and real-life business experiences; Sign up – Sign up!”
Reece Kershaw, Senior Liaison Officer / Federal Agent, Australian Federal Police – Law enforcement; The Netherlands.
- “Don't hesitate – too good an opportunity to pass up.”
Jodie Morgan, Finance Manager, Rich River Gold Club Ltd – NSW Club Industry.
- “Just Do It! Nothing more to say”
Bruce Saunders, Project Manager, KAZ Group (IT Industry)
- “Must do course! It was excellent. Experience of a lifetime.”
Sanjeshni Singh, Senior Account Executive, St George Bank Limited, (Banking and Finance).
- “Very practical, organised, well structured and comprehensive. Combines theory practice as well as true exposure to the subject. Highly recommended.”
Dr Edward Mishricky, Medical Practitioner, Morgan Street Healthcare Clinic. Managing Director – Orthotrend.
- “I believe the module is a great mix of theory and site visits all whilst taking in the culture of another country. I particularly enjoyed the visit to PostFinance from a purely “marketing” and job related perspective however can't go past the Credit Suisse boardroom and Mercedes plant tour as absolute highlights. Do it no questions – an experience to be remembered with many many applications for the work environment.”
Lee Brown, Marketing and Service Operations Manager, British Telecom.
- “The networking and exposure to European business and business people is second to none. I have found this course extremely comprehensive and it has cemented my learnings from many other subjects into a European experience.”
Susan (Sue) McGinn OAM, Self employed dairy farmer, Company Director for Dairy Farmers Co-op and Holiday Coast Credit Union.
- “They should definitely take up the opportunity. You will learn far more by being in Europe than you ever could by reading about it.”
Zoe Piper, Analyst, Wilshire – Private markets Group (Private Equity).
- “I deal with the national and international compliances, which involves negotiating with different cultures and understanding how they do business. This

program appeared to provide an opportunity to gain greater knowledge in this area. Apart from the field trips. The program offered a good level of academic learning and flexibility. The excellent mix of classroom and field trips was a good way to not only provide network opportunities, but to experience things first hand.”

William Leslie, Process Development & Quality Manager, Virgin Blue Airlines.

- “The diverse range of speakers and topics was stimulating, informative and well put together. Meeting and working with other MBA students and discussing the issues we were presented with enabled deeper understanding of the practical application. Group work was fantastic. Amazing value for money. The program has surpassed all my expectations! Fantastic!

Jennifer Miller, Director – Global Mobility Services, PricewaterhouseCoopers Expatriate Human Resource Management.

- “Be prepared for a lot of hard work and long days. But also be prepared for a very enriching cultural and learning experience. It is a wonderful opportunity to gain an insight into European Business”.

Roseanne Moss, Co-Director, Exact Recruitment Services Pty Ltd, Sydney.