

THE AMERICAN MANAGEMENT SEMINARS

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The core objective of the American Management Seminars (AMS) is to provide the students with a competitive environment that enables the individual student to develop his or her managerial potential.

In particular, the AMS provide the students with interdisciplinary challenges to develop their problem solving, creative and soft skills while developing their emotional intelligence and broadening their intellectual repertoires, all elements in cutting-edge management training.

More broadly, the AMS encourage the students to excel outside of their comfort zones and in the process prepare themselves for careers in a rapidly changing economic environment.

The AMS are run in the belief that competition brings out the best, it brings out the best students and it also brings out the best in the students.

The AMS also believe that competition does not mean exploitation and opportunism.

WHAT WE DO & WHY WE DO IT

CREATIVITY

QUARK SOUP

This seminar introduces the student to unorthodox and creative approaches to strategy; to techniques of non-linear, non-sequential perception of strategic opportunity, and to techniques on how to expect the unexpected. The course enhances the student's understanding of complex structures and their intuitive, instinctive approach to the market.

The reading list for this course includes articles from the Harvard Business Review, from the MIT Sloan Management Review, and from Emergence – Journal of Complexity, as well as texts from literary and philosophical sources. In addition, some classes are conducted at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the leading modern art museum in Central Europe.

THE BRIGHT IDEAS FACTORY

This seminar is designed to foster an understanding and appreciation of the creative mind so that the students can better exploit and direct creative activity in their future careers as managers. The course exposes the student to many forms of creative activity, it involves him or her in individual and team projects, as well as in class discussion and application of standard and innovative techniques.

The individual and team projects require a substantial creative input from each of the students. Some of the projects go beyond that and force the students into foreign or even hostile terrain. The basic ingredients in all of these projects are positive thinking, substantial emotional flexibility, team skills and imagination.

- One project in the hostile terrain category required one of the students to write an epic poem and then read it at a midnight gathering of penniless poets in Cologne. The student's efforts were so successful that the assembled poets took up a collection for him.
- Another project in this category required a team to do some research on the dietary importance of meat and develop a marketing pitch for rat meat as an alternative source of protein. The students then went to one of the busiest pedestrian shopping areas in Cologne and, equipped with a tray of fried meat nuggets, conducted – on camera - a consumer opinion poll. Of the 51% polled who were willing to taste the meat, 80% said that, yes, they could imagine eating it at home. The communication skills required and demonstrated here represent one of the biggest problems in creativity, i.e. communicating the value of your ideas to someone else.
- Another team was told to find a kindergarten and arrange to give a lesson in Pop Art to the children. The first problem here was convincing the kindergärtnerin that these business students would not establish a capitalist beachhead in the hearts and minds of the children. The subsequent, all-day Pop Art lesson was so successful that the students were invited back.

The material for this course is drawn from management education sources, as well as from the fields of art, literature, science and technology.

Some classes are held at the Ludwig Museum, where we study individual works as possible sources of paradigms for non-linear problem solving.

THE LIME TREE MOVIE COMPANY

A team of 12 students began in June 2004 to explore the opportunity of making a movie in the winter semester and to get it shown at one of the commercial cinemas in Cologne in 2005.

Four short films have already been produced in The Bright Ideas Factory, two in a Keystone Kops / Charley Chaplin idiom, two in the Expressionist idiom, and each film was more polished than its predecessor. It was now time to leverage this experience into a feature film.

For this more ambitious project we felt that a silent, black & white film had distinct advantages for us. A silent film would save us considerable time in rehearsals, although rehearsing the right body language might well be more of a challenge without the corresponding text, at least for amateurs, while black & white are technically more simple and thus less expensive. In addition, we felt that these features might make it easier to market the film.

The first idea we had was to do a remake of Fritz Lang's Nibelungen, but most of the students found this too esoteric. The second idea was to make a modern Märchen, but the feeling here was that originality might prove elusive. In the end, we decided to make a film around Albertus Magnus, the 13th century philosopher and theologian, a statue of whom stands at the entrance to the main building of the university.

Albertus Magnus (1200 – 1280) spent a considerable amount of his professional life in Cologne and is buried here in the Dominican church at whose chapter house he taught. It is not our intention to make a documentary or a film top-heavy with philosophical or theological ideas. At this writing we are working on a story set in 13th century Cologne, but with a narrow focus involving perhaps half a dozen local characters with Albertus Magnus hovering more in the background than in the foreground.

TILBURY HOUSE – THE DEBATING SOCIETY

The primary objective of the debating society is to develop the students rhetorical – and, by extension, negotiating – skills in a competitive environment. It also trains the students to perform under pressure while developing their confidence in front of an audience, both in Cologne and internationally. Finally, it encourages creative thinking.

In order to participate, the students must make an extraordinary commitment. The weekly sessions in the winter semester run from 7 p.m. to midnight. Attendance at every session is obligatory.

Since Tilbury House was founded in 1997 debating has become popular at German universities. However, we are the only society that debates exclusively in English while following the standard rules at international tournaments.

Tilbury House is supported by McKinsey & Company.

THE FINALS IN COLOGNE The finals, which are usually held in the Neuer Senatssaal (in 2003 in the Upper Gallery of the Ludwig Museum), take place every year at the end of January. The judges are always senior executives from the private sector, from e.g. McKinsey & Co., Bertelsmann AG, DaimlerChrysler, Disney Corp., ABN AMRO, Sal Oppenheim & Cie. et al. The presiding judge at the January 2004 finals was an English barrister and “First Debater” at the Inner Temple [Law Guild] debating society in London.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS The success of Tilbury House was most recently illustrated by our team ranking 21 in a field of 40 otherwise English university teams at the Inner Temple INTERVARIETY DEBATES in London in February 2004. We regularly participate in the Cambridge and Oxford Intersociety Competitions, as well as in the annual European finals, which in the last three years were held in England, Slovenia and Israel.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

On the eve of the second round of Chancellor Debates between the Messrs. Schröder & Stoiber in 2002, WDR TV aired an interview with us on the nature of debating.

Debating is not “debattieren.” It is a ritualized, parliamentary/rhetorical competition that operates at a high level of intellectual wit and follows rules established at Oxford and Cambridge universities early in the 19th century. See the half-page FAZ article on Tilbury House for more details.

THEATRE

Acting has recently become a popular tool in management development. It is used to deal with the conflicts arising from organizational change and it is used to develop leadership skills.

Our objectives are to develop the students management and leadership skills, their emotional intelligence, their crisis management skills and their ability to perform at professional standards under the considerable pressure of a public performance.

We have a modern theatre group that has mounted four productions at professional venues.

J.M. SYNGE’S PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, JUNE 2000

T. S. ELIOT’S MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, JANUARY 2001

PETER SHAFFER’S EQUUS, JANUARY 2002

HAROLD PINTER’S THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, JANUARY 2003

And we have a Shakespeare group that has also performed in public.

BURG SATZVEY, JUNE 2001

BURG SATZVEY, JUNE 2002

GLOBE THEATRE NEUSS, JULY 2003

The Shakespeare group is sponsored by the Boston Consulting Group.

In addition to the public productions, we also offer a Shakespeare seminar designed to develop the students' intellectual resources, teaching them in the process how the Elizabethan stage produced extraordinary results with decidedly limited resources.

THEATRE PRESS COVERAGE

Between the spring of 2000 and the summer of 2003, the AMS performed seven times in professional venues and received considerable local, national and international media coverage for these activities.

Die Wirtschaftswoche
DIE ZEIT
Financial Times Deutschland
Kölner Rundschau
Kölner Stadt Anzeiger
Kölner Universitäts Journal
Spiegel-Online
Wall Street Journal Europe
et al.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

From 1997 to 2001 we ran a summer training event called The Leadership Games designed to develop the students' ability to find creative solutions to unorthodox problems. The students were assigned to teams consisting of people they hardly knew or didn't know at all. The solutions had to be found within periods of less than 30 minutes. The teams were watched by professional observers (consultants from BCG) and were then given detailed feedback on their individual and group performance.

These events were reported on in the -

Handelsblatt
Junge Karriere.
Kölner Universitäts Journal

Since 2002 a psychologist (who works for DaimlerChrysler) has run half-day sessions with students from the AMS, helping them to understand and improve their team building skills and performance.

MANAGEMENT CASES

For many years we offered a management case study course which was enormously popular with the students.

One alumnus, who is currently responsible for European business strategy at a food and consumer goods multinational, has said that the AMS case study, strategy and creativity courses train the

students to analyze the market from shifting perspectives, and that this is a valuable tool in competitor analysis.

THE CHOPTANK SEMINAR

This is a seminar on the historical novel.

It is this writer's experience that many of the students do not have an eye - and an ear - for subtexts. Literary texts are of course rich in subtexts and thus lend themselves particularly well to deepening the students' awareness and understanding of layered meaning. In this seminar the students develop skills in decoding ambiguity, in identifying hidden patterns and in understanding complex systems, all of which are as important for an economist or a manager as for a student of literature.

STUDENT PROFILE

ALPHA CORPS – THE HONORS GROUP

The majority of the students in this program have above average marks. Some of these students are supported by the Stiftung des deutschen Volkes, the Adenauerstiftung, the Stiftung der deutschen Wirtschaft, the Thyssen Stiftung, the Begabtenförderung des Freistaats Bayern, the Hans Böckler Stiftung and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

A high proportion went to school in the U.S., study one or more semesters abroad, have musical and athletic accomplishments and run their own companies. Several served banking apprenticeships.

One of the students composes music, another is a former Youth Chess Champion of Hamburg, another has lived and worked with peasants in Brazil, another has a national office with the German boy scouts, two play in professional orchestras, another plays church music, several run youth groups.

There are currently students in the alpha corps from Egypt, Morocco, Ecuador, Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia, and the Ukraine. Some have lived in Germany for several years, some are only here for the duration of their studies.

The majority finish their studies well below the average number of semesters and with above average marks.

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE AMS

The students typically enter the program early in their studies and if they have the right mix of intrinsic motivation, academic accomplishments, extracurricular skills and sustained interests, they are accepted into the alpha corps, the honors (Leistungs) group of the AMS. They then remain in this group throughout their studies. There are currently 70 students and five doctoral students in the alpha corps.

The students in the alpha corps are expected to take part in and successfully pass all of the courses in the program. They are also expected to compete in the debating society and/or to take part in the theatre activities.

In interviews the students have described the AMS as an Anglo-American college enclave within the otherwise anonymous business/economics faculty. In addition, the students say that the makeup of this community adds substantially to their learning curves.

In interviews the students have said that they are drawn to these theatre projects because they are ambitious. The students also say that the responsibility vis-à-vis the other students forces them to find hitherto untapped and sometimes surprising resources deep within themselves.

PIM/CEMS

The above-mentioned seminars are recognized as graduate courses for exchange students visiting Cologne in the PIM or CEMS programs.

UNIVERSITÄTSTAGE 2001 & 2004

At the Universitätstag in 2001 we staged a debate on stage on the Aula 2. This year we staged a scene from Shakespeare's King Lear at the Kulturbox in the Hörsaalgebäude.

THE SPONSORS

In the past few years the AMS have received funds from the Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Co., Bertelsmann AG and Goldman Sachs. We have also received financial support from a growing number of alumni – in individual contributions ranging from € 50. to € 6,000.

The students set up a Förderverein a few years ago and – on their own initiative – most of them make a contribution of € 25. on a semester basis.

We have also received considerable non-financial support from a number of my alumni, corporate and personal contacts.

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

An AMS alumni association was set up two years ago by a senior executive at DaimlerChrysler. At present there is a membership of about 50 executives, some of them board members, in banking and finance, insurance, automotive, steel, chemical, consulting, food, entertainment, IT, media, publishing, retail, located in Germany, Switzerland, England and the U.S.