

smart CEO

WHITE PAPER

THE EXECUTIVE'S MISSING PIECE

Getting from Technical to Visionary

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Mid- and senior-level executives are successful in their respective fields, leading the charge in their areas of expertise and their teams toward company growth. These seasoned professionals already have strong specialized skills and may also be good managers. Even with years of professional experience, there are always opportunities for new learning. As a company leader, you already understand that both professional and corporate success is a culmination of your team's strategic thinking and the ability to find impactful ways to implement new ideas.

Building on existing technical or industrial skills by focusing on filling gaps in soft skills can be the missing piece for many executives. This can include team building and leadership development in order to give them new tools for implementation and the ability to think with long-term vision. Executive level education, such as an executive MBA program, is often the necessary next step in career progression and in helping achieve company goals.

Education is often the necessary next step in an executive's career progression.

Recently, an executive came to us with a challenging situation. Avery Amaya had been working in London for the European operation of a privately funded entrepreneurial venture. During that time, he was confronted with the sale of the company to a large private equity group out of New York that also bought out its biggest competitor — a simultaneous merger and acquisition. Avery rose to the occasion through the transition, but realized that he was missing some critical skills — a stronger foundation in strategic thinking and improved leadership skills to be better equipped for both corporate and career transitions. After his move to Philadelphia, he pursued an executive MBA and took a leadership position at technology provider WebLinc as vice president of sales and marketing. He said this about his experience:

"The team format used in the Drexel program for projects and simulations definitely helped me understand how to better execute. We had some extremely talented people in my class, people in very different roles from some of the biggest companies in the area, from corporate finance groups to large pharmaceuticals. What I learned from my classmates included how they build teams

in their professional environments, how they vet new concepts and potential solutions, move forward with them and how they make process improvements."

Executives like Avery often experience this transformative moment as the cohort structure of the executive MBA exposes them to the 360-degree view needed in high-level decision making. Shared immersive experiences such as experiential learning components and business simulations, coupled with interaction with inspired faculty, contribute to new perspectives that enable executives to understand and master specific leadership skills and convert that knowledge into practical critical thinking. These exercises help executives to be better equipped to anticipate future needs of business, have a better understanding of organizational function and work toward creating a vision for their organization which leads to converting their visions into reality — developing them into creative problem solvers and strong leaders.

Because of the nature of executive education, these new skills can immediately be put into practice and tested in the workplace, and executives can test new ideas and receive feedback from their peers. As new ideas develop into company innovations, the value emerges.

In his growing role at WebLinc, Avery uses his greatest takeaway from the executive MBA — leadership development — by mentoring his employees, imparting the wisdom and experience he's gained over his career and from the education he received.

"When we have tough decisions to make, I tell my team, 'There's no script. There's no manual for how to run a business successfully.' You evaluate every situation, work with the information you have available to you, look at the resources that you have on your team and make the best call. That was definitely something I learned in the program by working with some really brilliant people on some really difficult projects."

Drexel University's LeBow College of Business in Philadelphia offers experienced professionals the opportunity to earn an executive MBA emphasizing collaboration, personal growth and leadership development. The 20-month program has a convenient class schedule and is integrated with online coursework. For further information, visit LeBow.Drexel.edu/ExecutiveMBA or email emba@drexel.edu.

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