



Illuminating alumni

Alumnus: Dr Darren Coleman
Subject: MA Marketing
Graduated: 2006
Place of work: Wavelength Marketing
Position: Founder and Managing Consultant

Dr Darren Coleman has more than 15 years' brand marketing experience, spanning projects in the UK, continental Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia and Japan. He has helped brands such as Orange (UK and Group), BUPA, PepsiCo, Goldman Sachs, Standard Life, Maybank, Dubai Properties Group, Tupperware Brands and Nikon. He has also advised the British and Lithuanian governments on brand-related issues. He frequently speaks at international conferences on brand marketing and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Wavelength Marketing, the company Darren founded, offers brand advice, insight, education and design to organisations that expect their brands to deliver measurable financial returns. Wavelength's work is frequently informed by advanced statistical analyses that aim to reduce brand marketing risk.

Why did you choose to study MA Marketing and why specifically at Nottingham University Business School?

Only a select number of business schools in the UK offered an advanced marketing Master's programme. Nottingham was one of them. I'd completed an undergraduate business degree with a heavy marketing focus, and I also had several years' marketing experience.

For these reasons I needed to be sure I would be acquiring more advanced marketing knowledge. Nottingham helped with this.

What's your fondest memory from your time at the Business School?

Good question. I think it was the friends I made. It was a wonderfully international experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed that. I'm still in contact with many of the friends I made at Nottingham.

Why would you recommend studying at Nottingham University Business School?

The staff are first-class. They're not only extremely supportive but also conduct interesting and relevant research. This adds real value to the lectures you attend.

The alumni network is also very strong, which means the School frequently hosts very high-calibre guest speakers. For me this was both informative and inspiring, and I also learnt a lot about networking and building a network at these events - invaluable experience.

What advice would you give to others who are about to start on a course at Nottingham University Business School?

Make the most of every opportunity you can. Naturally, this relates primarily to your academic experience, but I'd be lying if I said you shouldn't enjoy some good times with your friends.

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You've worked for some major organisations and have also founded your own very successful business. What do you enjoy most about your work?

Working with some incredibly intelligent people who challenge and push your abilities to their maximum is something I find particularly enjoyable. The knowledge I acquired during my Master's and PhD is now starting to deliver real benefits, which is incredibly rewarding.

I also enjoy having a choice over whom we work with as a company. For example, we've turned down clients in defence and tobacco for personal reasons. It's unlikely I'd be able to do that if I worked at a global branding agency.

Also, the international aspect of our work means we can explore how the principles of branding apply in a broad range of markets and cultures. It's fascinating to do this.

And what are the main challenges?

A lot of companies say they work in branding but are actually design or communications agencies. Cutting through the noise is very difficult. That said, we're starting to carve out a reputation as service branding specialists, which is helping us address this issue.

Having to look for work is always a challenge, as is dealing with the ups and downs of trying to keep clients happy.

Different clients have different

interpretations of what a commercial relationship means. Sometimes we feel we give a lot and that a bit more balance would be nice. But this tends to be the exception and not the norm, as we have very good relationships with our clients.

Finally, currency fluctuations can adversely affect the commercial viability of some projects where negotiations are quite protracted.

How has the Business School helped develop your career?

By equipping me with advanced marketing knowledge that stimulated my interest in service branding and subsequent PhD research in this area. That knowledge is starting to become quite valuable now, and it also opens doors with senior executives at global brands who appreciate its value as a result of their own experiences.

Have you been back to campus since you graduated?

Yes, I was there only the other week, delivering a talk for Dr Sally McKechnie [Associate Professor of Marketing]. It was a pleasure to go back.

I was very impressed but not surprised to see how the Jubilee Campus has grown. It says everything about how well the University is regarded.

Are you still in touch with fellow alumni?

Yes, there's no escaping some people!

Joking aside, it's very easy to stay connected with fellow alumni. It's primarily via email and social media, given that most of them are based overseas. It's always a pleasure to hear from them.

In what way is remaining connected to your alumni network important to you?

If I can help in any commercial way I'm happy to do so, but it's primarily for friendship.



For more information contact:

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