

## **MBA Fairs: Stand Out from the Crowd!**

*By Richard Burns, a regular contributor to TopMBA.com*

Selecting and applying for an MBA program is a long and enduring process, in part designed to separate the committed from the less so. The first stage for many commuters on the admissions journey is attending an MBA tour, where admissions directors from top international business schools are available to meet with aspiring MBA applicants. However, the differences between making a fair beneficial to your business school applications, rather than a simple prospectus collection exercise are all too often forgotten.

“The most memorable candidates are those who have done some research on what an MBA is and is not,” explains Christie St John, senior associate director of recruiting and enrolment at Tuck School of Business, which is a regular participant on the QS World MBA Tour.

“They tend to use their time more wisely at fairs by asking pertinent questions about the programs rather than ‘so what is your GMAT average?’ or ‘how much does it cost?’” Tuck’s director of recruiting and enrollment points out. “Even though candidates may have just begun delving into the diverse MBA programs, they need to think about what is important to them and their career track.”

### **Research and preparation**

As St John mentions, lack of preparation is all too often an issue when candidates meet business schools at MBA fairs. A small amount of time researching a school can ensure that representatives are intrigued with applicants, rather than bored by questions that are asked time and time again, or can easily be found on an institution’s website.

“We advise candidates coming to meet us at an MBA fair to be well prepared by previously having checked [HHL’s website] and to bring along their CVs,” explains HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management’s head of communication, Volker Stößel.

Preparing questions is of huge importance when meeting the admissions officers that will decide whether you are offered a place at their school or not. With over 60,000 attendees at the various fairs on the QS World MBA Tour every year, ensuring that your queries are fresh and original will be vital in making sure that you stand out from the crowd.

Tuck’s director of recruitment, St John gives a few pointers: “Examples of good questions would be: ‘do you have courses that focus on corporate social responsibility?’, or ‘does your marketing track include research on utilizing social networks?’ Those are questions that will help [MBA applicants] narrow their search for the right program, and the admissions officer will be able to engage in a meaningful conversation with them.”

Narrowing your choices down to a select few business schools is also worthwhile advice. This is important, as it allows you to focus your research, and prevents you from wasting your time talking to schools that you may later find out cost too much in tuition fees, don’t offer your preferred electives, or even expect higher GMAT scores than you are capable of.

## One-on-one sessions

Once you have narrowed down your selection of business schools to apply to, a useful method of guaranteeing your application gets noticed by the MBA admissions departments is to register for a one-on-one session with one, or a few of your shortlisted schools.

Connect 1-2-1 is one such MBA matchmaking system. After creating a business school shortlist, MBA applicants can then register on the website to meet the schools for a one-to-one question and answer session with admissions representatives.

The sessions, lasting around 30 minutes are a perfect opportunity for MBA applicants who have decided upon a few different MBA programs, and would like to find out more before applying.

Imad Uddin Qureshi, who attended the Connect 1-2-1 event in Dubai explains that he narrowed his shortlist of business schools down to just one after meeting representatives from Ashridge Business School. "I am eager to join Ashridge for the January 2011 intake, as my discussion with [admissions representatives] at the Connect 1-2-1 event gave me a new perspective towards an MBA program, especially the one taught at Ashridge," he says.

However, while the informal one-on-one sessions tend to be relaxed, applicants need to keep in mind that the appointments are also an opportunity for schools to judge the potential of their MBA candidates. For applicants who are genuinely interested in pursuing an MBA, this can be very good news.

Qintao Liu, who attended the Connect 1-2-1 event in London, feels that meeting representatives from Henley Business School helped him secure a scholarship for his EMBA program. "After seeing them at Connect, I won a Times Henley Executive MBA scholarship runner-up and started the EMBA course with Henley Business School last year" he explains, highlighting how a pre-arranged meeting with a school can really make applications stand out.

Whether attending a one-on-one session, or simply the traditional MBA fair, candidates need to ensure that they are prepared to meet with the admissions officers who will play a role in deciding their MBA related fate. An MBA fair can often be the beginnings of a career upgrade, however for that to be the case, future MBA applicants need to put the work in to create a lasting impression on the business school representatives they meet.

*The QS World MBA Tour will be visiting the Middle East from the 9<sup>th</sup> of December till the 15<sup>th</sup> of December in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Manama. Candidates can register now at [www.topmba.com](http://www.topmba.com)*

**Source: topmba.com**

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The QS World MBA Tour is the largest program of recruitment and information fairs for business school applicants. In 2009 over 80,000 potential applicants registered to visit 85 events in 66 cities.

The QS World MBA Tour offers a unique opportunity to meet admissions officers of the world's most influential business schools at venues around the world. Now in its sixteenth year, the Tour will consist of 85 events across 42 countries over five continents during 2010.

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**For more information please contact:**

Paras Fatnani | [paras@qs.com](mailto:paras@qs.com) | Tel: +44 20 7284 7254

Mihir Patel | [mihir@qs.com](mailto:mihir@qs.com) | Tel: +44 20 7284 7260

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