THE SMIB MAG
THE MAGAZINE OF THE SMIB COMMUNITY
EDITO-SMIB

Being SMIB is not only a label that you get when joining the academic program. It is a real mindset, attitude and way of living that will stick to you all along the years. I can assert this, not only as the new appointed academic director of the program, but also as a former SMIB myself. This SMIB Mag is a perfect summary of this SMIB-spirit: business-oriented, open-minded, bold and authentic. As I am currently redesigning the overall Mastère’s strategy for the next intake, I have kept these ideas in mind, for instance through an increased focus for each of the possible tracks that we offer. Hence, should one be willing to become a real professional in strategy-building or consulting, Cergy is the correct spot to be; while business development is the focus in La Défense; and Business Conduct in Asia Singapore’s one. SMIBs are bold: how many of them have not only set up their business, but have done it in a disruptive way? Should you doubt, read the profiles we’ve prepared for you in this magazine!

Being open-minded is not an advertising catch phrase for the SMIB program. We really live diversity in our daily life: when on Campus, through the 45 nationalities represented in the program and the exchange programs such as with Egade in Mexico (check the article!); when on business trips, through the ‘SMIB for Smiles’ events (check their amazing story in this magazine); when at work, through the many chosen expatriation paths that SMIBs are in!

How do we do it? Simply because our focus is on excellence, in whatever we do – and to be excellent one needs emotional, cultural, theoretical & practical intelligence. Therefore, if you’re still not fully convinced, turn the page and start reading!

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Jacqueline Hochreiter

Rainmakers and Pot Stirrers: SMIB’s Very Own

Strategy. It’s a big word. Everybody’s talking about it. And in today’s world, everybody who’s anybody has a “strategy”. I could close to guarantee that any SMIB who has dropped the “S” bomb in answer to enquiry after our academic preoccupation has at some point been met with the response: “Wow, that sounds fancy. But what could you do with that?” Good question.

As scholars of Strategy and Management of International Business, SMIB students, old or young, are poised to enter and thereafter navigate the business world in whatsoever manner they may choose. We are positioned to forge our own paths in accordance with our own personal ideals. Some gravitate towards consulting, leveraging adaptability and flexibility across a diverse range of projects. Others find themselves in the throes of faced-paced and often cross-functional careers, leading teams of top multinationals the world over. Still others dream of something more. They hold a strong appreciation for ownership that, together with a robust knowledge of international market dynamics, inter-cultural sensitivities and a keen eye for opportunities, can only end well.

These are SMIB’s proverbial pot stirrers. They are the up-and-coming shakers and movers of their respective pursuits, spotting and capitalising on new opportunities in a world where, to the untrained eye, it would seem we’ve already done it all. Most plotted their entry point along their corporate trajectory, collecting and adding to their skills set before spinning out something of their own. A brave few took the plunge fresh out of ESSEC, perhaps a manifestation of the “start-up” energy abuzz in today’s SMIB classroom.

It’s tangible, almost electric – and ESSEC’s extensive investment in ideation, from entrepreneurial platforms in conjunction with partner universities to incubation and ventures facilities, fully supports the conversion process from “just a bunch of good ideas” to viable, investable business propositions”. Marc Joussé of ESSEC’s SMIB 2013/2014 class and co-founder of Wise Pack, a company that seeks to give second life to packaging by industrializing and commercializing natural and completely edible packaging, goes as far as to say that, entrepreneurially speaking, “[when] you compare across different Business Schools, ESSEC is by far the strongest. It’s absolutely free to students to make use of the incubator. We’ve definitely found ESSEC to be the most supportive structure in which to start”.

In any case, it cannot be pure coincidence that this year’s SMIB Mag feature spread profiles SMIB alumni of the entrepreneurial persuasion. The depth of variety is astounding: from (2006/2007) Guillaume Ala-Raisonnier’s corporate MOOC platform to (2010/2011) Patrick Nesme’s online pharmacy services, not to mention ideas inspired directly by our very experiences at ESSEC, brought to life by (2008/2009) Hardik Thakkar’s comparative university review platform and (2009/2010) Sébastien Tuffier’s Bed and School in answer to ALEGESSEC.
Hardik Thakkar
SMIB 2008-2009

With a vision to launch the education sector’s “Trip Advisor”, Hardik co-launched GetMyUni on 7 December 2014. The EdTech platform provides student written reviews, ratings and data insights to help prospective aspirants make the right education choice.

The idea was born of Hardik’s own experience during his original application to ESSEC. As a young student, faced with the choice between LSE, ESSEC, HEC and ESCP Paris, Hardik found himself amongst the choice between LSE, ESSEC, HEC and ESCP Paris. Hardik found himself amidst important university partners, particularly considering that all stakeholders are extremely important, especially in the beginning - “ideas become more clear when you talk to people, especially those that are in your target market”, says Hardik.

“Take notes, kids.”
#1 Have fun in college – but don’t forget to benefit from all the great start-up resources freely available on campus. 
#2 Believe in yourself and your ideas – but remember idea is just 2% of the pie the other 98% is execution.
#3 Fight with passion for users – sell, sell and sell.

Did you know?
Hardik started developing the project whilst still working full time for Alstom. Over-committed and under-supported, the first draft had to be scrapped. At that point, it was clear to Hardik that his full attention was required to bring together a close knit team and build a great platform.

Web: http://www.getmyuni.com | Connect: hardik.thakkar@getmyuni.com

Marc Joussé
SMIB 2013-2014

Marc Joussé broke into entrepreneurship straight out of the SMIB. With an engineering background and a passion for shared value, Joussé and business partner Romain Lefeuvre committed to “liv[ing] this adventure together”. Their objective is to give “a second life” to packaging by industrialising and commercialising natural and completely edible packaging. The idea came about whilst running the 2013 Paris Marathon and marveling at the sheer number of plastic bottles and cups discarded quite whimsically on the streets.

Much like any version of Design Thinking you’ve likely heard before, Joussé’s goal was essentially to make the competition irrelevant through disruptive creation of a new category of innovative, ecological and economically sustainable materials. He was introduced to a marriage between design and engineering during an early professional experience at Leroy Merlin, which he describes as an “illumination and inspiration”.

“Take notes, kids.”
#1 Have the passion to turn something you care about into something you fully believe in.
#2 “Try fail try again fail better”. 
#3 Spread your story and try to find at least one person with whom to start the business. “I couldn’t create Wise Pack without Roman”, – Joussé

Joussé attributes as essential to his current motivation his journey through SMIB Full-Track Singapore. “I loved to study mechanical and industrial engineering, but I was not ready to start my own company. ESSEC gave me the keys to create my start-up”. Indeed, Joussé is making full use of ESSEC’s Ventures and Incubator facilities, travelling out to Cergy as often as three times weekly because of the value derived from the input of ESSEC’s top entrepreneurial minds, “but also [the input of] all the teachers”, he says. The support has also taught him to listen: as a “one-idea-per-day” kind of man, Joussé is tasked with taking only his best ideas all the way from inspiration through ideation to implementation.

Did you know?
Joussé sees the field of packaging as too far removed from the reality that it in fact creates and, worse, perpetuates. His dream is to bring ecology and waste generation closer, with the ultimate intention of deriving economic value therefrom.

“Take notes, kids.”
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#3 Fight with passion for users – sell, sell and sell.

Web: www.wisepack.fr Connect: www.linkedin.com/pub/marc-joussé/64/74a/91a
Patrick Nesme
SMIB 2010-2011
Finding himself in 2009 as an intern based in Canada, Patrick Nesme was a position to contrast and compare different pharmaceutical sales strategies from a mature market point of view. He began to imagine how he could bring this home. It would be some time, however, until he could actually do so, considering the online sale of drugs was at the time still unlawful in France.

As a result of his ESSEC studies, Nesme got his foot in the door as an internal auditor in Sanofi’s New York office. “It brought me new knowledge about a company’s working processes and functional departments”, he says. All the while, he continued to study in contrast and compare different pharmaceutical sales strategies from a mature market point of view. He began to imagine how he could bring this home. It would be some time, however, until he could actually do so, considering the online sale of drugs was at the time still unlawful in France.

At almost the very moment that France de-regulated and began to allow online pharmaceutical sales, Nesme closed his eyes and jumped. He took a hand in the launch of IllicoPharma.com, today in France’s Top 10 online pharmacies and the platform with the biggest choice of medicine by a stretch. His initial involvement comprised the origination of the website and development of the online sales strategy. Today, he takes care of inter alia customer service, establishing KPIs and suppliers negotiations, as well as the constant search for future innovations to stay ahead of the competition.

Did you know?
Nesme believes that market anticipation and time management are the keys to success. Illicopharma was four months late to launch for want of being 100% ready. “That was a mistake”, Nesme says. “It is important that customers can order easily and quickly, and we continue to focus on improving the system, as well as working on new features.”

“One year on the internet is a lot.”
Web: www.illicopharma.com
Connect: www.linkedin.com/pub/patrick-nesme/7a/693/984

Florian Auriau
SMIB 2009-2010
With a background in computer engineering and subsequent work experience at a consulting company, Florian Auriau wanted a different kind of challenge. His restlessness lead to his enrolment in the SMIB, where he enjoyed the level of exposure to a variety of business practices. Following directly thereafter, he had the confidence to join a leading international venture capital firm, Partech International, which has $650 million under active management. Auriau takes this particular experience as the platform that gave him the opportunity to understand most of internet-based business models.

With this specific acquired knowledge in mind, Auriau went ahead and co-founded Qapa.com, the first site out there to truly focus on the needs of the employee in the job-matching process. Cleverly so, as their critical mass is oftentimes more important than that of the corporates’ in the online space. “Lack of money makes you smart”, says Auriau. “Even if we raised €2 million in seed round, we were very cautious. We initially only spent money on marketing and we still [consider ourselves to be] in a growth hacking mode”. The match criteria are simple, but effective: competences, place, salary and availability. The site enjoys more than 5 million visits per month and more than 3 million total members in less than 4 years, and its success is largely attributable to network effects accrued from ease-of-use and a set of customer-centric goals. But the venture’s success may also be attributed to the excellent people behind it: “[w]e succeed at Qapa because we hire experts in each field to complement our team. One of the main things I learnt from our investors is that ‘we are paid to hire people smarter than us’.” Nonetheless, Auriau will never forget where he comes from: “5 years after graduating, if I look backward in the mirror, SMIB at ESSEC was definitely one of the most important springboards for my career”.

Did you know?
Auriau believes that a great product is a product which people instantly understand and automatically value. Even so, Auriau lives by the rule: “20:80 Vision:Execution”. There are more than 1,700 job boards in France, both off- and online. Not only does one need to have a great vision of what one wants to achieve, but more important is the execution to reach it.

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”
Web: www.qapa.fr
Connect: www.linkedin.com/in/florian-anauriau

“Take notes, kids.”
#1 Learn before doing – discover new territories and cultures, be willing to cover various fields of business and build on your past experiences before taking it all on yourself.
#2 Find your fit – play to your strengths, and the money will follow.
#3 It requires a huge amount of work to develop an idea to be clear, simple and sexy all at once.
Sébastien Tuffier  
SMIB 2009-2010

Ideas exist boundlessly. It merely remains for us to choose to uncover them. Frustrated in working for someone else, Sébastien Tuffier in effect decided to open his mind. He looked for something to which he felt he could apply his own vision and play by his own rules. He sought change. It is no surprise, then, that he connected with someone in his network with whom he developed an idea: to provide a real estate service exclusively to students.

He would never wish to alter the path that led him to create Bed&School Paris, however which he calls his “most exciting and challenging experience” to date. He attributes quantitative and qualitative skills development to engineering school, and business acumen, an international perspective and the eventual position of ALEGESSEC as inspiration to Bed&School Paris. His time spent at SMIB 2006-2007

Having started the company at 26, he admits he made an array of mistakes, although his reflective and proactive nature drove him to “rise above” the mistakes, to “understand what was wrong and what [he had] to do to solve to problem”. Even though his company is now established, it does not suggest he can rest on his laurels. Some days require the same if not more hours dedicated to the undertaking than at the start; but he continues to see his professional journey as an opportunity to learn. “My first motivation is to learn always”, says Tuffier. “This need to learn also helps me to be creative and to always find new ideas to keep my concept alive”. His second main motivation is his family. For them, he “want[s] to make something big in this world”. His wish is to be an example for his children, and for them proud of their father.

Did you know?

Tuffier believes in learning to grow, and the taking of full responsibility for one’s failures. He endorses avid reading of books or newspapers from every horizon, travel to a variety of different countries, and the taking of opportunities to meet as many different people as possible, to be open and never to judge.

Web: www.bedandschool.com
Connect: www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=76861592

Andre Wegner  
SMIB 2006-2007

As Wegner prepared to leave his then home, Nigeria, in mid-2012 for Silicon Valley, a plane carrying 160 people crashed in Lagos, killing everyone. The failure was said to be based partially on the lack of available spare parts. Harrowed by the timing of it all ahead of his start at Singularity University, California, an institution focused on preparation for exponential technological change, he was delighted to delve into the world of 3D printing at Singularity.

Wegner realized that, eventually, everyone would make objects closer to the point of use using digital manufacturing technologies. Supply chain problems wouldn’t lead to delays, factory closures, fake parts or other failures. He was shocked that an industry that was worth 16.4% of GDP in the US was operating so poorly. He’d spotted his gap.

Did you know?

Wegner has the feeling that he “fails” in some small way every day. Looking back on each fault, he notices a miscalculation that seems so obvious in hindsight but in the heat of the moment there are many obvious things to juggle that some of them get lost. However, he takes these lessons to be the ground truths that I know now I should have followed, and will in the future.

Web: www.authentise.com | Connect: www.linkedin.com/in/andrepwegner

Did you know?

Web: www.bedandschool.com | Connect: www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=76861592

“Take notes, kids.”

#1 Be curious, open to the world. It will allow you to be creative, to have idea and to be active in your life.
#2 Don’t try to run after money. If you make something you like, even if the result is not fast, money will come.
#3 Develop your network as soon and as much as possible.

“Take notes, kids.”

#1 Don’t do it unless you’re willing to commit 10 years of your life to the idea, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.
#2 Startups are not something you can do alone. Your job as leader is to create an enabling environment that everybody can succeed in. Not only do you need people with varied skills but more importantly you need a team that can suffer with you and push on together.

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GROWING UP THE NEXT GENERATION: SMIB 2014/2015’S BEST

By Jacqueline Hochreiter

“It’s a privilege to be surrounded by driven people your age who have the same entrepreneurial spirit”. - Bernard

Soufiane Belkhiri

Raised in an entrepreneurial family, Soufiane Belkhiri was poised to capitalize on any opportunity he could spot. During time spent in New York City, Belkhiri noticed someone “smoking on a pen” in the subway. On return, his father offered him full support in the set-up of an e-cigarette business. Whilst completing his final year of studies, Belkhiri worked hard on the project and in May 2013, “e-Puff” arrived on the French market. As 23-year olds, Belkhiri and his team of 9 admit they had little credibility aside from their desire to surpass themselves every day. Two years on, all stores but one have been sold on for a neat profit, and Belkhiri plans to apply this experiential knowledge as well as the skills learnt in SMIB going forward.


Coralie Bernard

With an already obvious propensity to address change as and when she construes the need, Coralie Bernard’s vision to a future generation of strong women leaders begins with her passion for empowerment. Her belief is that a top-down approach is absolutely not the way to revolutionize the entrenched attitudes towards gender roles in the workplace, consequently inserting herself as a change-agent by virtue of a product which resembles “leadership coaching” that intervenes at the level of the student. Her own experience in the SMIB has grown her network, presented her with supportive mentors and has helped her to formalize her business-plan going forward.

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Grégoire Patacq

Thanks to ESSEC Singapore’s entrepreneur-ship collaboration with the National University of Singapore (NUS), Grégoire Patacq was presented with a diverse set of student partners and structured environment in which to mold and grow a fledgling idea. Fast-track to a now almost fully-developed app centered on fun and flippant conversation between two online participants (call it Battle of Words for the masses) with a launch date set for mid-April 2015. Patacq’s accumulated experience across activities ranging from “coffee & cookies” operations to beta-testing & “gamification” approaches in under six months during his two SMIB semesters can’t be matched when it comes to teaching “management from zero to the end”, says Patacq.

Website: www.ticktalk.co
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Jonathan Kieusseian

Since a young age, Jonathan Kieusseian had dreamt of running his own company and creating something innovative that would have an impact on people’s everyday lives. His first experience in a startup in London helped him develop his first project, an events agency in Sweden in 2009. After working for 2 years for Orange in Africa, Jonathan moved to Singapore in 2014 to pursue the SMIB at ESSEC Singapore, where he had an opportunity to collaborate with students from the National University of Singapore (NUS). Consequently, Jonathan, together with Syed Atif Husain from NUS, started Home Delivery, a platform that allows people to order healthy, home-cooked meals that are delivered to their homes. The best part is that these meals are cooked by talented individuals within their own communities. And now, thanks to the partnership with EGADE Business School in Mexico, Jonathan has extended his adventure by studying entrepreneurship in Mexico City for 3 months. He is taking this opportunity to discover synergies between different incubators in Paris, Singapore and Mexico.
SMIB IN MEXICO - EGADE BUSINESS SCHOOL EXCHANGE

By Élise Baudy and Grégoire Chevillat


During our first day at EGADE, we had the privilege to enjoy a gastronomic lunch with the director of the school and several professors in charge of the different masters programs. The meeting took place at the seventh floor of the building, which offers a great view on the whole city. Judging by the way we were welcomed, it seems that EGADE really cares about its partnerships with other schools and about its students.

At EGADE we had classes with MBA students, which was really useful to build a network, especially to get interviews for internships. We’d also like to emphasize the quality of the professors and the content of their courses that would help to be well-prepared for working life.

We would definitely recommend every future student of the SMIB to come to EGADE, it’s really worth it!

IN ORDER TO GIVE A COMPLETE FEEDBACK ON OUR EXCHANGE AT EGADE, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK A FEW QUESTIONS TO PHD. FERNANDO MOYA DAVILA, DIRECTOR OF EGADE BUSINESS SCHOOL AND FULL TIME PROFESSOR:

Tell us about yourself!

I’m Fernando Moya, I’m a professor, I teach finance and entrepreneurship. I’ve been working for Monterrey TEC for the last 22 years. Currently I’m working here at EGADE Business School, a graduate school of Business Administration. I’m the Director of the School in Mexico City site, in the southern part of the city. Also, I am the Director of the EGADE-TEXAS Executive MBA that poses a partnership with Mc Combs School of Business at University of Texas in Austin. I also do research in the area of entrepreneurship and finance. I’m currently working on research work that analyses the relation between emotions and entrepreneurship.

Why should foreign students come to Mexico?

First of all I think Mexico is a fascinating country, it’s a country that even though media are sending many negative things to the world. We have to consider that economically speaking, Mexico is one of the best places for investors, our per capita income has been growing enormously the last ten/fifteen years. A lot of foreign investments are coming to Mexico; it’s a better place than Brazil (don’t tell anyone!), even though we have this problem of violence in...
very specific states or cities in the country. Believe it or not, we are going through a very good economic period, we are growing, our macroeconomic indicators are stable, the inflation rate is the lowest of the last thirty years and our reserves in dollars are incredibly high. These elements send the message to the world that Mexico is a very good place to invest and we will keep growing thanks to that.

Mexico City and Monterrey are place where it’s very cosmopolitan; it’s fascinating to live there and to experience the everyday life there. More specifically, Mexico City is a very big city: cultures, people, way of living are very different. This cosmopolitan aspect does not prevent you to live the traditional “Mexican experience”.

What about EGADE?

EGADE Business School is the Business School of Tec of Monterrey. It’s a school that has all the philosophy of Tec of Monterrey. We are leaders in the topic of entrepreneurship, even if we also offer great programs in finance. EGADE Business School is improving in the rankings worldwide, we have been ranked #1 by many magazines, including the Financial Times and America Economia, in Latin America. But regardless the opinion of the magazines, this is a private university with a no profit-oriented perspective. We don’t care so much about profits, we care about academic quality and we care about our students and their learning process, more than the teaching process. We also put strong emphasize on two things: the quality of the students we recruit and the quality of our teachers. These two things give us an outstanding educational experience for all of us, not only students but also professors and for our research that is also something very important to us.

¡Bienvenidos!

INTERVIEW OF REGIS BONNET, FORMER SMIB LIVING IN MEXICO DF

By Élise Baudy and Grégoire Chevillat

REGIS HAS BEEN LIVING IN MEXICO FOR 2 YEARS NOW, HE WORKS AS BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER AT SERVIER IN MEXICO CITY. HE GRADUATED FROM THE SMIB IN 2013 AND WANTED TO SHARE HIS EXPERIENCE WITH US. WE MET HIM IN POLANCO – THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT OF THE CITY – WHERE HE TOLD US ABOUT A ROAD TRIP HE MADE THROUGH LATIN AMERICA DURING 6 MONTHS IN 2012, HIS JOB AT SERVIER AND HIS PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE HERE IN MEXICO.

How did you get the idea of doing the road trip in Latin America?

This road trip was a little boy’s dream. I’ve had it in mind for a while. Actually everything started the summer after high school. I was kind of bored of earning pocket money one month and spend it all on the following month of summer holidays. So for once, I decided not to stay working at home and took a train to Barcelona – clearly influenced by the movie “Auberge Espagnole”. My objective back then was simple: to find myself a cool place to stay, improve my Spanish and to earn my living abroad. Well, it definitely happened the way I expected it. I remember my parents skyping me to ask when did I plan to come back for business school, which was about to start a few days later! This first big step abroad tailored my professional project but also fed the dream of a much longer road trip, cruising many different countries and cultures.

Why Latin America and not elsewhere?

By that time, I knew roughly 80% of Europe thanks to several holidays with my parents and an “Interaíl” trip I made in the Balkans. I also got to know an interesting part of Pacific Asia and Australia during my time in the SMIB that I completed in half-track Singapore/Cergy. So I was naturally oriented towards Latin America! In Paris I had several Latinos friends, we used to go out dancing salsa in clubs and drink tequila! They always spoke about their respective countries and I started to picture myself in it. All the mystic stories you can hear about the Amazon, Machu Pichu, Salar, and Patagonia… It grew up my curiousness and attraction for this corner of the earth. But also I could feel a match with the Latin culture, their happiness, generosity, simplicity… This is how I came up with the idea of a road trip from Mexico down to Argentina!
Let’s get back to Mexico, was it difficult to get a job in here? What about your job at Servier, could you tell us a bit more about it?

Mexican immigration law changed a couple of months before my arrival, on November 2012, and things got a bit more difficult since then: your working visa must be accepted by a Mexican embassy prior to your landing in the country, such permit can only be allowed if you already have a job offer, companies must respect quotas for foreigners within the headcount, a lawyer and some extra money will be necessary to submit your application to the INM, ... As a result, the most common process (I did it myself and many friends) is to arrive as a tourist, look for a position and get the job offer, negotiate with your future employer that he will take on the immigration expenses, spend a long weekend in the USA in order to fulfill your application at a Mexican embassy, come back to Mexico with a temporary working VISA and transform it to a permanent one at the INM with your company’s lawyer!

My position at Servier Mexico – Business Intelligence Manager – consists in the Sales Force Effectiveness (SFE), strategy planning and developing new projects. To do so, it requires great analytical skills, a deep knowledge of the business and the national market to anticipate the competition and identify the laboratory’s opportunities, but also intercultural management as I am leading a team of 3 analysts and sales administrators.

How the SMIB program helps you in your everyday life at Servier?

First of all, the SMIB helped me in winning the job. I had no background in the pharmaceutical sector, however the Directors placed their bet on a younger candidate with a true business vision from ESSEC rather than a manager from other area in the Pharma industry. Then, the SMIB program helped me in organizing my tasks with a 3-step approach: analyze, execute and monitor. The great variety of subjects that we learn during the SMIB are very useful to interpret managers and directors of any department, coordinate new projects, and lead a team of specialists.

What’s next? Any other plan for any other achievement?

By the time you’ll be reading it, I hope to have taken a huge turn in my professional life: to quit my job in order to create a company! The owners of a new and successful franchise in the beauty industry have invited me to open and develop their French brand in Mexico. As mentioned before, it is important to seize the opportunity when it shows up! It’s a whole new universe of challenges waiting for me ahead and it will requires to enhance my entrepreneurial skills... Wish me luck! ;)

ESSEC ALUMNI NETWORK IN MEXICO

By Élise Baudy and Grégoire Chevillat

The 2015 ESSEC Network Meeting took place on February 20th in Polanco – the financial district of Mexico City. This meeting enabled to revitalize the activity of ESSEC Alumni community in Mexico.

This convivial event was kindly organized by Bénédicte Roy (ESSSEC 1979, CFO – Point Pay) and Elise Fernandes (ESSEC 2010, Senior Auditor - EY Mexico).

The objectives of the ESSEC Alumni network are to foster the community spirit between ESSEC alumni, share experience on everyday life in Mexico and enhance a strong alumni network to benefit alumni’s career.
This event was a great opportunity for networking and finding out more about the ESSEC alumni that decided to pursue their career in Mexico:

- **Alejandra De Anda**  
  ESSEC IMHI, Revenue Manager – Novotel

- **Elise Fernandes**  
  ESSEC 2010, Senior Auditor - EY Mexico

- **Bernard Luquet**  
  ESSEC 1973, former CEO

- **Bénédicte Roy**  
  ESSEC 1979, CFO - Point Pay  
  0052 55 50 73 87 75  
  benedicteroy2000@hotmail.com

- **Régis Bonnet**  
  ESSEC SMIB 2012, Entrepreneur

Organizers are planning another networking event in Monterrey - the industrial centre of the country - before the end of the year, where a large number of ESSEC Alumni live.

Ambassador of the network ESSEC in Mexico:

**Bénédicte Roy**  
ESSEC 1979  
CFO at Point Pay

Mrs Brick, France’s External Trade Minister visit. From left to right: GE France CEO, Alstom Nigeria Manager, Seine Maritimes’s Senator, Lagos Budget Minister, Mrs Bricq, France’s Consul Général for Nigeria, Lagos Governor (Mr Babatunde Fashola), Lagos Minister for new technologies, Paris MP, France’s Ambassador for Nigeria, Kevin Huard, Lagos’ Trade Minister and the Economic Counselor of France Embassy in Nigeria.

**Kevin Huard, SMIB 2008**  
Project & branch manager at BearingPoint Casablanca

I got admission into the SMIB program in 2007-08 after having studied at Arts & Métiers ParisTech for 3 years. This program gave me the relevant fundamentals to be gainfully employed and successful at Mars & Co, a consulting firm in Strategy present in six countries. After 4 years working in Paris for mostly CAC 40 members, I had the desire to go to an emerging country in Africa. I got the opportunity to work for the French Development Bank/Agence Française de Développement (AFD) as the Manager of the Lagos Branch. I had the choice between Ethiopia and Nigeria however opted for Lagos considering the size of the Nigerian Economy. Lagos is the largest city in Africa with 17 million inhabitants with an urban growth of 5% per year. It represents alone 25% of the GDP of West Africa, more than Ghana, Ivory Coast and Cameroon together with an urban growth of 5% per year.
The least I can say is that I have not been deceived nor regretted the decision. It was quite a challenging experience in a vibrant country. AFD was a recent institution in Nigeria then and projects were signed in co-financing with the World Bank. This enabled us to build a network and a project portfolio but limited our own initiatives. Thus, I had to leverage on these experiences to promote AFD’s awareness to our potential partners, like the State Governments, private companies and the banking sector. This first phase allowed me to build a broad network in Nigeria and to represent AFD in official events, like the visit of French Ministers in Lagos, as well as to identify a 100MUSD project in the urban development sector with the Lagos State Government which aimed at upgrading several slums in Lagos for about 300,000 inhabitants and the development of infrastructure for waste management. This project was AFD’s first independent project allowed us to launch several housing credit products dedicated to the less privileged Nigerians, with the objective to touch 3,000 households. It was also a very innovative project as it allowed us to launch the first housing credit products in Nigeria apart from Mortgage loans. The project is now being monitored by the Federal Ministry of Finance to assess the opportunities to expand it.

After two years, I had to come back to Paris in order to continue working with AFD, but, I decided to stay in Nigeria to remain in a dynamic environment, which is very enlightening, personally and professionally. Thus, I launched my consulting company and I had interesting mission from European companies more oriented on distribution and business development strategy. I am now developing business with the public sector and Nigerian companies to structure projects, including development of business plan and financing.

All along my short professional experience, the knowledge acquired from the SMIB program has enabled me to overcome obstacles and enhance my global performance. In addition to my engineering background, the strategy, financial, marketing, project management and negotiation skills provided by ESSEC have been essential components of my success. Most importantly, being an ESSEC graduate provides you with the necessary credibility and confidence to break even where most of people would have given up.

Thibaut Saguet is one of the most achieved examples of success among the SMIB’s alumni. He followed the entire training at the ESSEC, right after his Baccalaureate. He agreed to share his singular trajectory...

**Thibaut Saguet, SMIB 2010**

**CEO & founder at** Primeseccoenergie.com, **Enr’Cert & EnR’SuN**

*Primesecoenergie.com*

**When did you enter the ESSEC Business School?**

I started my studies at ESSEC in 2003, in the BBA (the program was then called “EP-SCI”). I was graduated in 2007. After that, I started my apprenticeship in Saint-Gobain in the fields of the management control and finance. I tripped in Prague for half a year. After the SMIB, I left Saint-Gobain, as I was more motivated than ever to create my own enterprise. For it to happen, two professors from the ESSEC Business School were particularly helpful to me: Mr. Francis Declerck (Corporate Finance) and Mr. Olivier Fourcadet (Business Plan), so I would like to thank them very solemnly. They are the ones who ensured me that the project I was running was relevant, well thought with a good business plan, not so risky, and would be profitable. At the very beginning, the main difficulty I came up against was to finance a project that demanded a lot of equities and the main difficulty I came up against was to finance a project that demanded a lot of equities and dealing with a field I was unfamiliar with: the renewable energy. So, I had to get far clearer about the related issues before showing up to any banker. That’s what I did, under Olivier Fourcadet’s advice. When the banker agreed on financing my project, I decided to create several companies rather than only one, so as to avoid a situation in which the biggest company would have been indebted for the others.

**Why did you choose the SMIB and what did you get from it?**

I entered the SMIB to gain a background I was lacking at that time. I was looking for high quality trainings, which I found in the SMIB in 2009. It was a Mixed and Executive Master. It was also a part-time program (half of my time was dedicated to my studies, the rest to my work at Saint-Gobain). I followed the courses in the campus ESSEC owns in the CNIT, at La Défense. There, I had the amazing opportunity to get in touch with many people with quite different work profiles. Studying alongside with them was all the more enriching to me as they all were older than I was! I also enjoyed myself travelling in Beijing (study trip), it was really interesting, from a cultural standpoint.

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Not only one of the most prestigious French banks supported me (Crédit Agricole), but also some private investors. That resulted in a so-called “snowball effect”: indeed, several banks followed afterwards (Oséo, BNP, Caisse d’Epargne)! On the whole, I have received around fifteen million euros.

In 2011, I launched ENR’CERT, a company that is specialized in energy efficiency under B2B. ENR’CERT was created to comply with an EU rule that compels the energy companies to allocate 1.5% of their turnover to the energy efficiency. So, the energy companies use ENR’CERT to invest in energy efficiency projects. It is a set of partnerships. ENR’CERT is accredited. ENR’CERT issues certificates to enable the energy companies to fulfill their European obligation to finance energy efficiency projects. ENR’CERT approves/validates the projects. ENR’CERT selects the project, brings the remia that come from the energy company that finances through ENR’CERT. The certificate has a value. ENR’CERT rewards a part of it to the owner, another part is retained by ENR’CERT, the remaining part goes to the energy company.

Also, what was an advantage for me in that process was that in 2009-2010, the rates of return for such projects were at their top, so bankers were less reluctant to be part of them than they might find themselves to be nowadays.

And now, how is it for you?

I am currently running several companies that own more than twenty solar plants. The first project I led in 2009-2010, while I was still studying in the SMIB, is ENR’SUN (solar energy). ENR’SUN has a turnover of 3 million euros. After a great period of development, the government decided to decrease the feed in tariff for the new project. The profitability decrease to 8-9%. When I started, I used to sell one kilowatt no less than 60 cents of euro, whereas it is no longer ex-ceeded, I used to sell one kilowatt no less than 60 cents of euro, whereas it is no longer ex-

My third project consists on a website dedicated to the private persons (B2C): www.primesecoenergie.com. It allows them to profit from premia for renovation work they make in their own houses. It is exactly the same principle as for ENR’CERT, but for a private person. The premium goes from the energy company to ENR’CERT, and then to the private person.

What I can say as a conclusion is that the last two companies, ENR’CERT and PRIMES ECO, are operating in a tremendous market and are in full expansion. Thus, ENR’CERT generated 500,000 euros of turnover in 2012, 5 million in 2013. We are targeting between 20 and 30 million euros for the few years to come (and this goal is really achievable).

In 2013, I created a holding to reinvest the money I earned with my three companies in other projects. I will settle a new company to take part in other projects than the ones dealing with energetic issues I am nowadays involved in, for I am really attracted to new matters.

So, to sum my particular experience, I may point out that I was really alone when I started (today, I can rely on much more people: lawyers, lobbyists, consulting cabinets...). The ESSEC VENTURE at the CNIT La Défense run by Mr. Julien Morel was the ideal structure for me to make my plan work the way I wanted it to. The ESSEC VENTURE’s back up, not only the offices I spent near two years working in until I was finally able to open my own, but also its reputation, its image, were extremely useful to my project at the time it could have been regarded as lacking of credibility. Indeed, I insisted a lot on how strong the ESSEC VENTURE’s support was to my project so as to make it worthy of both interest and trust for the bankers.

Wael NASR, SMIB 2011
Co-founder & CMO at Eunogo

After the SMIB and an internship in international business development at vente-privee.com, I joined Rocket Internet in Singapore early 2012. It was the occasion to participate to e-commerce start-ups launching and growth that today are leaders in South East Asia. It allowed me to gain in responsibilities and specialize in e-marketing. Therefore I joined management teams of Wego (Skyscanner & Kayak equivalents) in Singapore, then Bobobobo (online marketplace for lifestyle fashion products, restaurant coupons, live tickets & travels) in Indonesia. Having capitalized on these experiences in fast-growing web start-ups and different business models at different development stages, I took the leap and started working full time on my own start-up project. I am now working on a medical tourism web platform between South East Asia and South Korea with a partner from INSEAD who shares the same passion on entrepreneurship.

The implementation of a strong network and the expertise of the local market have been a key to develop these projects. Indeed, when it comes to start-up creation in a region with such a dynamic economic development, it’s all about execution – Experience and contact sharing with our network can save us month of work ! Moreover, at each development step, my SMIB & engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address each development step, my SMIB & engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address each development step, my SMIB & engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be business engineering backgrounds allow me to address every aspect in depth: may it be
Alexandre VARGEL, SMIB 2014
Consultant at Mawenzi-Partners Paris & designer of ESSEC’s coat of arms

I joined ESSEC SMIB aiming to be able to integrate a strategy consultancy. At the end of the program I was received for several interviews with various consulting firms. I managed to get three offers and I accepted Mawenzi-Partners’ one, mainly because I felt good in this firm’s atmosphere. It is a coincidence that many of our consulting projects are for large companies’ marketing departments!

During the SMIB, I was graphic designer for the mastères’ student union. When I read the mail announcing ESSEC coat of arms contest, I immediately desired to participate. It was a new challenge; the chance to get involved for the first time in a project that is not just for students and participate in my own way to the development of my school.

I proceeded in a fairly Cartesian way: putting on a sheet of paper the list of ESSEC’s values (excellence, openness to the world, etc.) that should be represented on the coat of arms. I then sought to represent and combine together to form the coat of arms. I naively done much research on the shields of schools and institutions around the world and selected forms or ideas that I liked.

Frank Asenkat, an ESSEC Alumnus, then worked on Final Design.

The Coat of Arms explained

• The wind rose was for me the best way to embody the “pioneering spirit”.
• The horses are a choice of Mr BLANQUER; for the contest I originally proposed a Merlion and a rooster.
• The laurels were a way to represent the excellence of our school. Before being a symbol of victory, this plant was carried by Greek poets in honor of Apollo. I found this duality perfectly suited to the rank of ESSEC business school.
• The 6-pointed stars is an addition from the designers company that finalized my proposal. Why six branches? One answer comes in connection with the triangle they draw with the compass.
• The open book: We are a school, we never close our books very long time...

SMIB FOR SMILES 2014 - 2015
By Albane Zelmar

The Cergy team

The SMIB association, originally founded in Singapore 4 years ago, has been developing in Cergy for the past two years and is now officially active on both campuses. From 2013 to 2015, the SMIB for Smiles team based in Cergy has been focusing on a project supporting education in Africa, partnering with Horizon Cameroun, an association already active in the country.

The goal is to be able to buy a school bus for the village of Ngoma, which would allow kids to have an easier access to their school. They currently have to walk for two hours to go to school. This bus would offer a concrete solution to facilitate their access to education as well as their everyday life. Their families would be more likely to let them go to school since they would also have more time to help in the cocoa fields or in the household.

This year, the team has been continuing the fundraising thanks to food sales at ESSEC and online crowd funding, with an ambitious objective of 10,000€. The project is almost completed so SMIB for Smiles counts on you!

In parallel to this African humanitarian project, SMIB for Smiles has organized an action during the study trip in Geneva, to help homeless people from the city, in partnership with an association called Café Cornavin. The students travelling to Geneva for their business trip took part in the action and brought food and clothes collected beforehand at ESSEC.
During two hours, the class had the opportunity to help homeless people by preparing and distributing food, discussing with them and giving out the clothes. This was a great experience for the class which contributed in fostering the team spirit within the SMIB.

The Singapore team
By Claire Glemau

Claire Glemau
President Singapore

SMIB for SMILES is currently one of the only humanitarian organizations both present and active on the Singapore campus. Why is it so? When one looks into the fundamental drivers, one realizes fairly quickly that it’s really because every single SMIB student likes to get involved; automatically, we involve ourselves in different associations, clubs, start-ups, sports teams etc. SMIB for SMILES is the result of strongly motivated set of original students who believed that the only existing limits are the one that we imposed to ourselves.

That same spirit enhances the development of this association today. The current team organized several successful fundraising events, developed partnerships with local associations, pursued the cooperation for the second consecutive year with the MOELC (Ministry of Education) and reinforced its visibility toward French community in Singapore such as the French Embassy or the French Institute of Singapore.

Having worked with a committed team, willing to give of their personal time to share their humble knowledge and to bond with locals on a subject as important as education is a memorable, human experience. I firmly believe that the SMIB for SMILES association reflects a willingness to go beyond borders and the motivation to make things happen – it embodies the very spirit of an entire promotion: “GET INVOLVED”.

“This moment was one of the best of our entire business trip! The people were great, and the discussions helped us realized the importance of organizing great events like this! Great memories, great people! Thank you Café Cornavin!”

Sandro, English Track
20/04/2015: French workshop at MOELC foreign school Bishan with Singaporeans teenagers learning French

SMIB for SMILES members organized a workshop about the French gastronomy and music for Singaporean Students learning French. An amazing experience and opportunity to meet young Singaporeans, exchange with them on the main cultural differences between the two countries as well as give them advices about potential studies and career in France.

Involvement week - Action painting

Fundraising events & second-hand book collection

We keep in touch on SMIB for SMILES Facebook page! Contact us on smibforsmiles@esseclive.com
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