

Finding opportunities

By David Williams
TopMBA.com

It's being able to talk face-to-face with people that makes all the difference," says Lungi Maminza, now a Senior Manager with Pricewaterhouse Coopers in Johannesburg. "I had not even considered the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) before I went to the QS World MBA Tour, but being there, talking to them, finding out how well they fitted with my criteria was instrumental in my deciding to go and study in The Netherlands."

Lungi Maminza did his first degree at the University of Cape Town and began his career as an engineer working first for packaging company Mondi Kraft and then joining Unilever as a factory engineering manager. He then moved into supply chain management role with Anglo Platinum, a subsidiary of Anglo American.

Lungi however was aware that in order to progress his career, he would need to learn new skills that were never going to be covered working in engineering and operations. He particularly wanted to learn about finance, strategy and to gain some first-hand understanding of China.

"My criteria were very clear," he says, "I wanted to study abroad meaning experience the diversity of culture, and in a non-Anglo-Saxon country, my thinking being that there would be an extra dimension to the experience if I was in a non-English speaking environment. I wanted classes to be small, made up of different nationalities with no dominance and to be able to spend time in China. Other things were important as well – such as rankings and the availability of scholarships – but these were my key criteria."

Coming to the QS World MBA Tour event in Johannesburg not only allowed Lungi to approach schools directly, it also helped him place what each offered in the context of their rivals and to talk to other candidates who were going through the same process of consideration and selection.

"The opportunity of talking face-to-face made a profound difference and led directly to my choosing the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM). For example, I was able to find out about and discuss their relationship with China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) which is based in Shanghai. In fact, because I had this discussion and it was such a key criterion for me, I was able to push for and achieve inclusion on the China-based element of the program when I was actually on the MBA, which was a huge benefit for me.

"Indeed I found the whole experience of the fair so positive and so valuable that, when RSM was unable to attend last year due to the volcanic disruption in Europe, I volunteered with a couple of other alumni to man the stall in their absence!"

Lungi's best tip for anyone considering an MBA is to consider the impact of class size. "I wanted small classes and at RSM that's what I got," he says. "For me, the danger of big cohorts is that it's impossible to get to know everybody and what



Lungi Maminza, Senior Manager with Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

to learn from as many people and points of view as possible.

"If however you go to a school with a smaller, more manageable cohort, you are able to interact with everybody. Of course, this doesn't mean that you are going to form long-lasting friendships with everyone, but the fact is I got to know all of the 104 people in my year group and I don't think that would have happened if the cohort had been larger."

The other area Lungi thinks is important is the diversity of the student body. "At RSM, 95% of the participants came from outside The Netherlands and no single nationality or ethnicity dominated. This worked for me, and one of the reasons I avoided US schools was because I think, if a specific group is in the majority, it is just natural for their point of view to dominate. If a professor calls for an answer or an example, it's more likely that will come from the majority group, just because of the numbers. I liked RSM because there was no dominant group, and, especially, not one from the host country. It allowed a freer, more global discussion."

For RSM itself, taking part in the QS World MBA Tour and being able to attract African students creates the same kind of benefit as it does for Lungi. "Attracting African students is very important for us," says Maryke Steenkamp, assistant director for marketing and admissions at RSM. "Not only is the calibre of the individuals very high but they also bring with them a fresh and interesting perspective to the in-class dynamic. Discussion of case studies and issues is hugely enriched by their presence, and having an African contingent in the MBA class also means that we can reflect the make up of the global business landscape."

More broadly, attracting African students gives RSM the opportunity to invest in such an important developing economy. "Our African students often choose to return to their native countries at some stage after their MBA," she says. "They take with them skills, experience and networks that they can put back into their communities. For us it is an investment in the continent rather than just an investment in our MBA."

The QS World MBA Tour is in Accra on Thursday 24th March, in Lagos on the

For more information, contact:

Arak Cerff
arak@qs.com
+27 (011) 867 3466
Grant Thornton report - Women in the Boardroom

QS World MBA Tour

The QS World MBA Tour is the world's largest series of recruitment and information fairs for business school applicants.

In 2010, over 60,000 MBA candidates registered to visit 85 events in 66 cities in 42 countries.

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 17th year, the Tour will consist of 83 events across 42 countries on five continents during 2011.

QS TopMBA.com Applicant Survey 2010

The QS TopMBA.com Applicant Survey 2010 is the largest survey of the mindset and aspirations of MBA applicants ever conducted.

The results provide detailed insight into the status, attitudes, goals and ambitions of MBA applicant worldwide and how they, and the employment and education markets for young professionals, are changing.

