



## TOP 5 QUALITIES OF THE BEST BUSINESS PROFESSORS

HOW CAN TODAY'S EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROFESSORS MEET NEW BUSINESS NEEDS?

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The digital era of massive open online courses (MOOCs) together with blended learning, the fast rise of new competitors such as consulting firms in the educational space, and tighter corporate learning budgets in an unstable global economic environment are all threatening to disrupt the traditional business schools.

While technology is a great complement to traditional pedagogical approaches; at the end of the day, you can't replace a great professor and face-to-face learning. In business, you need to be challenged to really learn effectively.

At a top-ranked business school focused on executive education like IMD, we look for a special type of profile, different than what you would find at other schools and universities. After having been at IMD for nearly 30 years and President since 2010, here are what I consider the top 5 qualities of a great executive education professor today. The best business professors are:

### **1] Concerned with impact above all else**

Business schools should be dedicated to serving the needs of industry and having an impact on both individuals and corporations. Professors have to focus on research that can find its way into the business world quickly. In some areas, like digital marketing, the internet of everything, or new business transformation; things change pretty fast. In academic circles, a research paper can take a long time to write, to get reviewed and published. While 10-15 years ago, major fast moving consumer goods companies used to work with leading marketing thinkers, today, a large majority of them prefer to work with tech giants: the Facebooks and Googles of the world. "Academics are too slow" is a comment I regularly hear from Chief Marketing Officers.

Business schools need to be "non-dogmatic" about research and development (R&D) and keep a balance between the "R" and the "D". Leading business thinkers have a broad understanding of research and consider anything that can bring value to corporations, individuals or teams extremely important. Peter Drucker would have never had as much impact if he stuck to writing academic articles.

### **2] Globally minded and focused on context**

Every year over 8'000 executives from about 100 countries come to IMD. Our professors wouldn't be doing their job right if they only focused on the best and next business practices from the US alone. Yes, a lot of new business concepts have been born in America, but most corporations are looking at exploiting business opportunities in the so-called emerging markets where "western ideas" do not always work. Great business faculty have to find the best and next practices whether they come from Asia, Europe, Africa or the Americas and from all types of organizations.

These days, clients are telling us that "content only" is becoming a commodity. Schools, consultancy firms and other organizations are churning out freely available business content on a regular basis.

What corporations want is knowledge applied to their particular context. If a faculty member can't do that, then their teaching may not be meaningful to companies in specific geographies. A pharmaceutical company does not operate the same way in Europe as it does in Africa. Professors need to know how to take this new demand into consideration.

### **3] Powerful communicators**

Professors in executive education have to be able to communicate to and be respected by executives from all different levels, from middle managers to CEOs and across the whole spectrum. They must be at ease speaking to experts and at the same time explaining complex information to someone who has little knowledge of it.

Take our new "[Global Center for Digital Business Transformation](#)" and the "[Leading Digital Business Transformation](#)" program for example. A lot of executives were coming to IMD with concerns about emerging topics like big data, social media and mobile technology asking: "What does it mean for my company? How does it affect us? What do I need to know? What do I need to do?"

A great professor can translate highly technical subject matter into practical language that business leaders can put to use fast. These new initiatives are run by professors who want to do exactly that.

#### **4] Intellectually independent and neutral**

Companies, teams and executives know they can count on the best professors to be committed to finding the right solutions for them without considering the school's balance sheet.

Executive education is getting more and more competitive every year. Consulting companies are increasingly crossing over into the educational space. Consultants can no longer just provide recommendations to companies; they have also realized that they need to help organizations execute. While more and more executives consider consultants as faster and more agile than professors with academic backgrounds, they can also be perceived as being less neutral, often on the lookout to sell the next contract. The best professors carry themselves with integrity, and are committed to creating the highest impact, not just generating more business for its own sake.

#### **5] Guided by strong personal values**

Outstanding faculty members are not only focused on advancing their personal agendas. Let's face it; you won't go broke as a professor at a top-ranked business school. But the best ones are not in it for the money. They are invested in building the institutions where they work and strengthening the reputations of their schools. They are driven by a love for teaching and a passion for making a real impact on business.

Do you have these 5 qualities? Are you also innovative and want to work with top executives from some of the best companies in the world?

Then you might have what it takes to be [a great business professor](#).

*[Dominique Turpin](#) is the Nestlé Professor and President of IMD. He co-directs [IMD's Orchestrating Winning Performance](#) program, the next edition of which takes place in Singapore on 16-20 June 2015.*

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