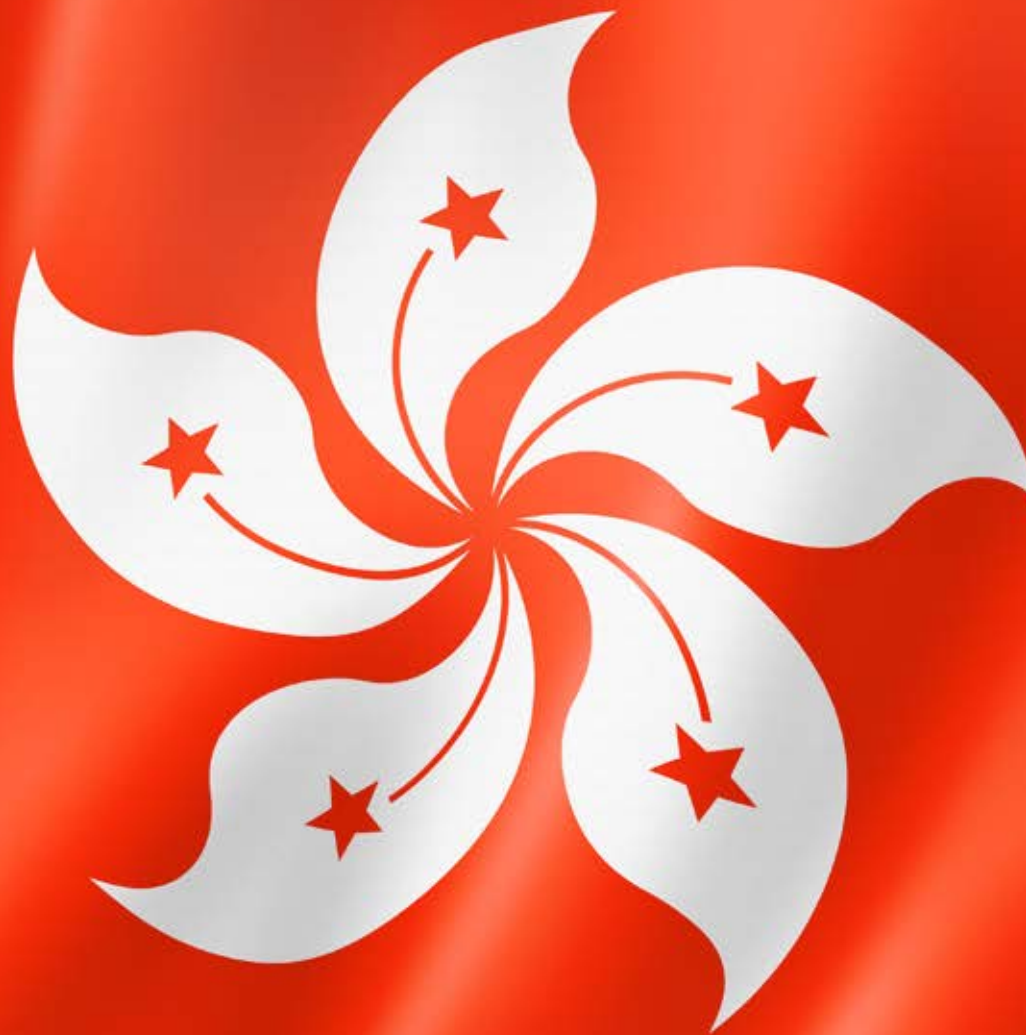


INSEAD



The Business School  
for the World®

ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES HONG KONG



INSEAD

A decorative horizontal line with a small upward-curving flourish in the center, positioned below the INSEAD text.

ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES  
HONG KONG

“ Without action, the  
world would still be an idea”  
– Georges Doriot,  
INSEAD Founder  
(1899-1987)

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## From the Dean

It is my pleasure to present ***Alumni Perspectives***, a series that spotlights, by country, INSEAD's trailblazing alumni and pays tribute to the accomplishments of our exceptional National Alumni Associations (NAAs).

Less than six decades after its inception, INSEAD has topped the Financial Times global business school rankings two years in a row (#1 MBA in 2016 & 2017). High-calibre students from over 70 countries bolster their knowledge across three state-of-the-art campuses – in Fontainebleau, Singapore, and Abu Dhabi – as well as via exchange programmes with select institutions around the world. Our unparalleled global alumni network includes 48 NAAs, over 54,000 alumni, and spans 170 countries. The founders' bold and pioneering vision has become a reality.

As we celebrate this powerful international presence, and seek innovative responses to quickly evolving global challenges, it is essential that we invoke our school's extraordinary history. But it is equally important that we distil reflections from today's expanding INSEAD community, and draw upon them to reach our highest aspirations.

Within this series, you will hear from inspiring alumni whose journeys weave the very fabric of INSEAD's identity. Industry leaders, entrepreneurs and contributors to their communities, they have found exemplary ways to harness 'business as a force for good' at both a global and local level.

These featured alumni speak of a transformative experience at INSEAD. They also describe an enduring set of values that has guided them throughout their careers. They embrace diversity and embody a truly global mindset, born of intense multicultural immersion. Throughout the interviews, they express gratitude for the extensive support of their professors and INSEAD peers around the world, and encourage engagement in the vibrant Alumni Associations.

As Dean, I am fortunate to have heard many of these compelling stories first-hand. I believe they are worth sharing. Now, I invite you to discover them, and to learn more about INSEAD's living worldwide legacy.

Ilian Mihov  
Dean  
INSEAD



## From the President of the Hong Kong Alumni Association

Welcome to the very first series of Alumni Perspectives 'Hong Kong' – a publication that celebrates the wonderful presence and contributions of INSEAD alumni based in Hong Kong. Our 800-strong alumni body is one of most diverse networks in this cosmopolitan city. Comprised of over 46 nationalities, our community is growing and becoming more engaged than ever before.

INSEAD's alumni community in Hong Kong is part of a robust and globally connected network of alumni from 170 countries. Having a sense that we are part of something bigger than ourselves is both remarkable and valuable, especially in a world that is undergoing rapid change.

Today, INSEAD continues to rank as one of the finest business schools in the world. I hope the reasons for this collective achievement will become clear as you travel through the following pages. With the focal point being the Alumni Reflections section, you can learn more about the unique experiences of inspiring alumni living in Hong Kong. Their commitment of embracing diversity and leading with an international mindset is clearly displayed here.

Over the course of the years, our alumni family is held together by purpose-driven initiatives and events organised by alumni volunteers. We have shared not just experiences; but, also a journey in building a more vibrant community. As we look ahead to the future, we are confident that the INSEAD spirit being shared amongst our alumni would continue to enable us to make an impact in Hong Kong, Asia, and the rest of the world!

Derek Chang, MBA'10J  
President  
INSEAD Alumni Association Hong Kong







# National Alumni Associations

INSEAD has the most globally robust alumni network of any business school, with 48 active National Alumni Associations (NAAs), and over 54,000 alumni spanning 170 countries.

NAAs are typically established in countries where there are at least 100 resident alumni. Their purpose is to further strengthen the alumni community within that country, and to increase opportunities for alumni to connect on multiple levels with one another, the faculty, and the school.

While many other schools are able to claim an international alumni base, none have the breadth and depth of the global INSEAD network.



## National Alumni Association Hong Kong

### Extended Footprint, Diverse Offerings

As of 2017, Hong Kong is home to nearly 800 INSEAD alumni. Throughout the year, alumni attend an array of networking, social, and educational events, all support by a team of alumni volunteers.

You can contact us at the following channels:

Email: [alumni.hk@insead.edu](mailto:alumni.hk@insead.edu)

Website: [blogs.insead.edu/hongkong-iaa](https://blogs.insead.edu/hongkong-iaa)

### Presidents of NAA Hong Kong

Over the years, the following alumni have served as President of the INSEAD Alumni Association Hong Kong:

Derek Chang, MBA'10J

Bertram Lai, MBA'00D

Marvin Lai, TIEMBA'09Jan

Dexter Chun, MBA'84D

Paul Skipworth, MBA'95J

Brett Rierson, MBA'94D



## Hong Kong Alumni Association Events & Activities

### Putting Our Alumni First

Enriching the alumni experience has been the key focus of the current Executive Committee of NAA Hong Kong since the beginning of 2016. From exclusive social events to meeting with high-profile business leaders, the Committee has strived to organise events that are relevant to interests of INSEAD alumni from all programmes. As evident in the following images, this includes a variety of themes such as entrepreneurship, career change, and leadership development (among others).

To quote one participating alumnus: "The Hong Kong NAA is constantly organising new types of events that I would probably never have been to if it was not via INSEAD! Moreover, we get the chance to discover new topics that are interesting not only for me, but also for my partner."







Yes! Entrepreneurship Can Be Taught with Prof. Paul Kewene-Hite



“When it comes to event planning, we take pride in being selective. For every event that we organise, it should add value and make it worthwhile for our alumni to join.”  
– Derek Chang, President, NAA Hong Kong



Making Radical Career Change with Daniel Porot



## Social Events

### Family and Partner-Friendly

As any local INSEADer will tell you, Hong Kong is a great place to meet with INSEAD friends at practically any time of the year. Besides the Monthly Alumni Drinks, which usually take place on the first Friday of each month, the NAA regularly organises family-friendly social activities such as sports activities, themed (and random!) dinners, and even cultural tours.

### Networking Opportunities

In Hong Kong, alumni can network not just within the INSEAD community, but also across multiple alumni associations. This includes the BBQ Dinner with Cambridge Judge Business School and IMD that was held in early 2016. After building momentum from such joint professional and social events, the Hong Kong NAA hit a year-end milestone in 2016 by hosting the inaugural Joint European Business School Gala Dinner which was attended by 140+ alumni from Cambridge Judge Business School, ESADE, Oxford Said Business School, IMD and London Business School.



Joint School Dragon Boat Race



BBQ Dinner



VIP Cocktail @ Longines Masters





Exclusive Event - Art of Cognac Tasting



Heritage Tour @ Asia Society HK Center



'Random' Dinner



Inaugural Joint European Business School Gala Dinner



“ The alumni community is a great place to meet people and share ideas. You receive a lot more than what you give. It's return on social capital. For me, it was also a wonderful way to stay involved with the school for which I had - and have - a strong affection.”



Brett Rierson, MBA'94D  
NAAHK President (1995-2002)

“ The INSEAD alumni community is absolutely unique amongst business schools. No matter where you come from, or start from, once you leave INSEAD, you are part of its family forever.”



Paul Skipworth, MBA'95J  
NAAHK President (2003-2008)

“ The INSEAD alumni network is absolutely top quality. We all experienced the strong bonding when we were at the school. The association provides a platform for every alumnus to continue enlarging their network outside of their industries after leaving the school. Being a member of the INSEAD family brings us closer together, building our friendship and sometimes mentorship much faster.”



Dexter Chun, MBA'84D  
NAAHK President (2009-2011)



“ The fun of joining the alumni association was all about making new friends, seeing old friends, and growing with friends and the association together to impact lives.”



Marvin Lai, TIEMBA'09J  
NAAHK President (2012-2014)

“ The Alumni Association is a community and as such we are all already members of an ambitious, global, business group. As a community it is only as strong and vibrant as we choose to make it. It is only through the contribution and participation of all of us, that we will create a network that will be the envy of all those who have yet to be a part of the INSEAD family.”



Bertram Lai, MBA'00D  
NAAHK President (2014 – 2015)



# INSEAD's Global Community

This satellite map accurately reflects INSEAD as the most diverse, international business school in the world.

The dots represent clusters of more than 54,000 alumni across 170 countries who transcend boundaries, nationalities, languages, and cultures to do business in new and exciting ways, every day. With 48 National Alumni Associations, INSEAD has both an unparalleled global reach and a strong local voice.

With integrated campuses in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and alliances with top institutions spanning the globe, each individual student at INSEAD benefits not only from a cutting-edge business education, but also from intense cultural exchanges beyond the classroom.

A key driver of INSEAD's excellence – our faculty – also come from every corner of the world. International thought leaders in their fields, they are widely recognised for their groundbreaking research, innovative teaching methods, and award-winning business cases.



WORLD MAP LEGEND:

- Alumni
- Executive Education Participants
- National Alumni Associations
- INSEAD Campuses

In addition, over 150,000 professionals hailing from six continents have attended INSEAD's leading executive development programmes – subsequently bringing back nuanced perspectives and proven best practices to their companies, communities, and countries.

Today more than ever, INSEAD's vision of 'business as a force for good' is essential in developing thoughtful, passionate, skilled, and value-driven global business leaders.



**795**  
INSEAD Alumni  
based in Hong Kong

**406**  
MBA

**41**  
EMBA & EMFin

**4**  
PhD

**344**  
Executive  
Education



# Alumni Reflections

At INSEAD, diversity goes far beyond the number of nationalities per class. It's a genuine, continuous and spontaneous series of encounters. With 159 nationalities represented, our alumni are citizens of the world.

In the words of one graduate, INSEAD students 'experience the world as it ought to be', and become dedicated to extending that experience through their subsequent life and career choices – in their own countries, as well as internationally.

This aspect of the INSEAD culture is an invaluable asset for today's leaders, who must think and act both locally and globally, in an increasingly hyper-connected world.

The following featured alumni are representative of the INSEAD mindset and qualities – demonstrating authenticity, originality, and passion for making a global impact at a local level.

## Ben Keswick

MBA'02D

Managing Director

The Jardine Matheson Group

Ben Keswick has been Managing Director of the Jardine Matheson Group – a diversified Asian-based group with a broad portfolio of market-leading businesses – since 2012. Prior to being named MD, he served the group in a number of executive positions in Hong Kong, Singapore, and New Zealand, including Finance Director and Chief Executive Officer of Jardine Pacific. Ben also serves on the boards of a number of listed Group companies, and is currently Chairman, Jardine Cycle & Carriage and a Commissioner of Astra International. He is also Chairman and Managing Director of Dairy Farm, Hongkong Land and Mandarin Oriental, and Managing Director of Jardine Strategic. Ben also holds a Bachelor of Science from Newcastle University, UK.



### **What drew you to INSEAD?**

There is strong family involvement in Jardines, and I am a member of the fifth generation to work for the firm. With my undergraduate degree in marketing and sales, I was keen to gain a formal education in finance and to better understand how it underpins the base of business. For me, the step away for one year seemed right compared with the lengthier durations of the other MBA programmes. These aspects, together with all its other accolades, meant that INSEAD ticked all the boxes for me!

### **How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

INSEAD is a perfect melting pot that combines the academic rigour of its leading faculty with the breadth of industry experience of its students (who on average have six years' working experience). When you put these elements through the crucible of case studies, it provides very insightful lessons, which ultimately gave me much more confidence in my business sense and judgment.

### **How has INSEAD's global alumni network been important to you?**

Attending INSEAD lays the foundation for a network of people with a broad spectrum of knowledge and experience. Coming from different industries and professional backgrounds, this network will prove useful on the road ahead.

“**As students at INSEAD, you will be amongst the future business leaders of the world. Never forget your responsibility to society.**

### **In your opinion, what makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

INSEAD has consistently been recognised as the most diverse leading business school in the world. With its multicultural classroom and its campuses around the world, the INSEAD MBA Programme is truly unique. A leading global programme that is well structured into a one-year timeframe, with

the added benefit of an Asian presence, made INSEAD uniquely attractive to me.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to current INSEAD students, what would it be?**

I feel very strongly that businesses need to be a force for good. As students at INSEAD, you will be amongst the future business leaders of the world. Never forget your responsibility to society. At a more individual level, it is a great opportunity to take stock of your life so far and chart your path forward as you enter the next phase beyond this MBA. Finally, remember to have fun! Meaningful relationships will (hopefully) be built over this gruelling MBA, and this is important as you start to build your network.

## Damien Dernoncourt

MBA'02D

CEO

Naga Group

Damien Dernoncourt is the CEO and Founder of Naga Group, which brings financing and functional expertise to creative entrepreneurs and designers in the branded consumer goods space. Prior to Naga, Damien ran John Hardy for 11 years, a jewelry brand he built into a true global luxury player. Through a management buyout, Damien assumed control of the company with the support of private equity group 3i. In 2014, he sold a controlling stake to L. Catterton and is now a board member. Damien began his entrepreneurial career in Hong Kong before starting his own merchandising and packaging company in China, which he later sold. Born in France, Damien has been living in Hong Kong since 2005. He has two children.





### **What were you doing before your MBA, and what drew you to INSEAD?**

I was between Hong Kong and China, and had just sold my latest business – a branding, merchandising and packaging company that I had founded three years before. It was a fast-growing business, which came with its own distinct challenges. I knew I needed to sharpen my financial skills and understanding of the investor world to become a truly successful entrepreneur... and I was drawn to INSEAD's excellent reputation, to its one-year programme (lower opportunity cost), and to the opportunity to spend time in France.

### **Some alumni like to reminisce about their study groups – the multicultural perspectives, heated discussions and rewarding collaborations. What stood out from yours?**

It was clear from the beginning that it would not be an easy experience – seven strong personalities and cultures, with no hierarchical rapport. But once you understand that each member of the group has a different MBTI profile – and therefore assimilates and

shares information differently – you can learn to collaborate well, and obtain excellent outcomes. After INSEAD, I have continued to create teams with diverse backgrounds.

### **What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA?**

I made great friends and developed a fantastic network at INSEAD. However my primary reason for doing an MBA was to learn and acquire skills. Interestingly enough, the main thing I actually acquired – rather than skills – was a way of thinking and of looking at business opportunities and challenges. This turned out to be far more important, as it remains relevant 15 years later.

### **A consistent theme for alumni is that they leave INSEAD with a set of values. How would you describe those values?**

I took away four INSEAD values, which I have consistently applied throughout my career. First, authenticity – life is too short to live any other way. Second, accountability – for your decisions and actions. Third, transparency – for faster performing teams. And finally, diversity – to obtain richer outcomes.

### **What advice would you give to a current INSEAD student?**

The alumni network is excellent – and many relationships begin at INSEAD. So, it's important to take time not only to study, but also to build those relationships. Reach out to, meet, and spend time with as many fellow students as possible during your time on the several campuses. Never in your life will you be surrounded by so many smart individuals with free time at their disposal.

“ Four INSEAD values which I have consistently applied throughout my career: authenticity, accountability, transparency, and diversity.

## Jean-François Laval

MBA'97J

Executive Vice President, Asia  
Airbus

Jean-François Laval is Executive Vice President Customer Affairs Asia for Airbus, a position he has held since 2012. Based in Hong Kong since 2007, he heads the Airbus regional office. Jean-François has been working for the Airbus Group for more than 20 years in a variety of subsidiaries and roles, with much of his career spent in Asia. Previous leadership roles include Senior Vice President Asia at Airbus, President & Representative Director at EADS Korea, and VP North Asia of EADS predecessor Aerospatiale. He has also worked for Eurocopter, as well as the Finance Directorate of Aerospatiale. Born in France, Jean-François is married with two children. His hobbies include flying, sailing and skiing.



**How did you originally decide to do an MBA programme, and what drew you to INSEAD in particular?**

Before making a decision, I went through a lengthy and extensive process to choose an MBA programme – travelling all over the United States with a friend, and visiting several top institutions. While all the schools we visited had their own merits, I finally applied to the INSEAD MBA only, for several main reasons: INSEAD offers real international exposure, a true multicultural experience, and a one-year programme (which I believe is the right amount of time to spend outside the work environment at that point in your life and career). In addition, financially, the one-year MBA is the best possible return on investment.

**What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA? Business Knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

I would say all of the above. Obviously, I learned a huge amount from a business knowledge point of view— and all those learnings still help me in my career today. The lifelong friendships have also been very

important for me, and are closely linked with the very multicultural experience. Overall, INSEAD was a truly transformational experience for me in many ways – it changed my view of the world, my way of approaching issues, and my life itself.

**How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career, or help you reach the next level?**

Even before I began the programme, I had already embarked on an international career. However, the INSEAD MBA definitely helped boost my career and accelerate the next major steps.

**In your opinion, what makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

The School is now truly international. I recently had the opportunity to participate in courses on the Asia campus in Singapore, which is an excellent complement to the original Europe Campus in Fontainebleau. When I was a student back in 1997, the Asia campus had not yet opened, but the School already had a very international feel, with a student body coming from around the world. It is definitely an added advantage that today, INSEAD students can split their learning experience between several campuses on several different continents.

“ **INSEAD was a truly transformational experience – it changed my view of the world, my way of approaching issues, and my life itself.**

**If you could give one piece of advice to a current MBA student at INSEAD, what would that advice be?**

Enjoy the experience fully from day one! Participate in every aspect of the incredibly rich INSEAD life— and make plenty of friends.



## Marvin Lai

TIEMBA'09Jan  
Chief Investment Officer  
Cyberport Marco Fund

Marvin Lai is Chief Investment Officer of Cyberport Macro Fund, Executive Director of Hong Kong Venture Capital and Private Equity Association, and Associate Professor in Practice at Tsinghua University School of Economics and Management. Prior to Cyberport Macro Fund, his leadership positions included Managing Partner of iTM Ventures, Senior Advisor at LionRock Capital (HK), and Senior Partner at ES Capital. Marvin is a Fellow of the Hong Kong Institute of Directors, a Professional Manager designated by HKMA, a Member of Hong Kong Securities and Investments Institute, Director of the Board of Hong Kong Business Angel Network, past President of Columbia University Hong Kong Alumni Association and INSEAD Hong Kong Alumni Association, and was Assistant Governor (2013-2014) of Rotary International District 3450.



### **What were you doing before INSEAD?**

I was CEO of a global distribution company with offices in Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, the UK, and Dubai. While I was contemplating the next step, I noticed the dual-degree EMBA programme offered by two worldly renowned institutions – Tsinghua and INSEAD. The programme (TIEMBA) invigorates participants not only with academic excellence, but also with a strong and diverse global alumni network. I instantly decided to pursue TIEMBA to broaden my horizons.

### **What part of your INSEAD experience immediately comes to mind?**

Abu Dhabi! I was fortunate to get admitted into the pioneer TIEMBA class. Part of the programme was conducted on the Abu Dhabi campus, which came as a pleasant surprise. The unique experience of learning state-of-the-art business thinking, with a group of extremely smart people from around the world – and in such an exotic place – still inspires me today.

### **What was the greatest thing you gained at INSEAD? Business knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

All of the above! On campus, it was the professors' excellent teaching that nurtured our business knowledge and shaped our confidence in career redirection, along with classmates' support that developed into lifelong friendships. Off campus, experiences in multicultural cities such as Beijing, Singapore, Fontainebleau, Abu Dhabi and Shanghai showed us the business implications of our classroom learning.

“ Learning state-of-the-art business thinking – with a group of extremely smart people from around the world – still inspires me today.

### **Which class or professor influenced how you see business – or the world – the most?**

Professor Peter Zemsky (Strategy) who taught us the renowned Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), which originated at INSEAD. It was an eye-opener to use cutting-edge BOS tools to solve real world problems. The class ultimately helped clarify my post-INSEAD vision and interests.

### **For you, what's the best way to stay connected to INSEAD?**

Definitely through participating in the local alumni activities. I was honoured to serve as President of the Hong Kong INSEAD Alumni Association, an extremely rewarding experience! I had the privilege of meeting the pioneers of INSEAD and witnessing their passion in making an impact on INSEAD itself, as well as its stakeholders, alumni, and programme participants. The alumni opportunities have also connected me in cities across Asia, Europe, and South America... and shown me the true meaning of the words 'global village.'

### **What advice would you give to current INSEAD students?**

Three things: don't miss out on the Abu Dhabi experience; stay connected with your local alumni association(s), and give back to INSEAD, your alma mater!

## Natalia Obolensky

MBA'13J

CEO and Director

Plukka

Natalia Obolensky is the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Plukka, an international, multi-brand, fine jewellery company with retail operations in Hong Kong, London and the United States. She runs Plukka's international operations, strategy and finance, as well as worldwide investor relations associated with being listed on the ASX. Prior to this role, together with fellow INSEAD alumni Leisha Olandj, Natalia co-founded London-based CitySwish – a consumer lifestyle services business. In 2016, after sustained growth, CitySwish was sold to a competitor. Previously, Natalia spent five years with Bain and Company, working across the US, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, and Azerbaijan, among other locations. Natalia also holds a double undergraduate degree in international relations from Brown University and Sciences-Po Paris.





**What were you doing before your MBA, and what drew you to INSEAD?**

I was a management consultant with Bain & Company. I knew I wanted to widen my business horizons with an intense, international experience... which is why I chose INSEAD!

**How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

I gained insight into a variety of perspectives, cultures and business expectations from my classes and study groups, as well as from living with fellow students of many different nationalities. Working together in a safe environment like INSEAD was excellent preparation for collaborating with international teams, and for doing business across cultures in the real world.

**What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA? Business knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

It's difficult to choose – INSEAD gave me so much! If I had to pick, I would probably say

the network. It has been essential not only from professional perspective (I've called on INSEAD connections to help me in a number of tricky business situations), but also from a personal perspective – I count many INSEADers among my closest friends, all over the world.

**Many alumni say that INSEAD was 'transformational' or 'the best year of my life'. Would you say the same?**

Absolutely. I went to INSEAD looking to meet new people and challenge my own perspectives on business, but I wasn't looking for a big change in my professional life. After INSEAD, however, I ended up starting my own business – a move that was truly 'transformational'. In addition to being pivotal for my career, INSEAD was also one of the most exciting, fun and challenging years of my life.

**A consistent theme for alumni, from across classes, is that they feel as though they left INSEAD with a set of values. How would you describe those values?**

INSEAD instils a sense of openness and an ability to see and understand different perspectives. Additionally, INSEADers generally have a strong work ethic (finishing an MBA in 10 months requires

“ In addition to being pivotal for my career, INSEAD was one of the most exciting, fun and challenging years of my life.

that!), an ability to overcome obstacles, and a general kindness and sense of ethics that guides us in all our business dealings.

**In your opinion, what makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

Definitely the people. I found my INSEAD classmates to be hugely intelligent and experienced, as well as open, fun loving, and exciting to be around. The combination of the excellent professors and the dynamic fellow students made INSEAD an incredible experience for me.

## Philippe Schaus

MBA '90J

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
DFS Group

Philippe Schaus is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of DFS Group, and a member of the LVMH Executive Committee. He joined DFS in 2011 as Group President, Merchandising and Marketing, and was appointed to his current role in 2012. Following roles at J.P. Morgan & Co. and at The Boston Consulting Group, Philippe held several leadership positions at Villeroy & Boch. In 2003, he joined Louis Vuitton, part of the LVMH Group, as President of the Europe Zone. He was then appointed Senior Vice President International in 2006, and became Executive Vice President in 2009. Philippe also holds a degree in aerospace engineering from The University of Liège, Belgium. Born in Luxembourg, he is married with four children.



### **What drew you to INSEAD?**

After an Aerospace Engineering degree in Belgium and a first job in Finance at JP Morgan, I had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, especially in the wider domain of business administration and management. Among all the possible MBA options, INSEAD attracted me as a relatively young and dynamic business school— that had already built the reputation of being the best in Europe. INSEAD also offered a more diverse and interesting mix of students and professors.

### **What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA? Business Knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

My wife and I had a wonderful year, in a beautiful part of France, with plenty of parties, excellent wine and cheese— all while making great friends. At INSEAD we were part of a large and friendly family. The memory of this exceptional year remains, and we have kept good relationships with many of the friends we made. Professionally, INSEAD gave me a solid business foundation in key disciplines like

Finance, Marketing, Negotiations, Strategy, and Organisational Behaviour (one of my favourite classes!). INSEAD also helped me rethink my personal and professional objectives, and guided me towards my next job, as a Consultant with BCG.

### **How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

Pre-INSEAD, I had already worked in an international position, and was globally minded. However, INSEAD prepared me for the continuation and diversification of my international career – through the legitimacy the INSEAD MBA gave me, as well as through the knowledge and capabilities I gained.

### **How has INSEAD's global alumni network been important to you?**

I have stayed in contact over the years with friends I made in Fontainebleau. I have also used the INSEAD network when recruiting, and always found the people I contacted both helpful and forthcoming. Finally, INSEAD alumni (both young and more senior) regularly contact me for guidance and advice.

### **What makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

What distinguishes INSEAD from other business schools is the international mix of students and professors, the cultural background resulting from the multiple campuses, and the belief in open borders, humanity, and the importance of ethics in business.

### **What advice would you give to current INSEAD students?**

Get the most out of INSEAD: the journey is the destination. Take advantage of the unmatched quality of your professors and fellow students. Be more obsessed with learning than with your career. And create friendships for life.

“ **What makes INSEAD unique? The international mix – and the belief in open borders, humanity, and the importance of ethics in business.**



## Tinuade Benson Bergkvist

MBA'01D

Principal, Asia Pacific  
International Finance Corporation

Tinuade is a Principal at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), where she heads IFC's Asia Pacific's Special Operations team. After joining IFC in 2002, she has been based in Washington DC, Istanbul, London and now Hong Kong. She has led investments in emerging markets in Africa, Europe and the Middle East; and in sectors spanning agri-business, infrastructure, banking, solar, manufacturing and chemicals. Tinuade also holds a degree in Economics with Actuarial Sciences from Southampton University, and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. She is Vice Chair on the board of the Child Development Centre in Hong Kong. Born in Nigeria, She is married with three children.



### **What were you doing just before you decided to pursue an MBA, and what drew you to INSEAD?**

After completing my undergrad in the UK, I was pursuing a traditional audit career with Arthur Andersen in London — but I needed something more exciting and meaningful. INSEAD — with its one-year programme, ideal location, diversity, multiple campuses, and international outlook — was the only business school I applied to.

### **How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

Being at INSEAD gave me essential exposure to global entities I was interested in. Furthermore, learning from the diversity of experience of my classmates — and tapping into my post-INSEAD network — has been invaluable as I moved locations and worked in different markets over the past 15 years.

### **Many alumni say INSEAD was 'transformational'. Would you say the same?**

INSEAD was certainly transformational for me. It was an eye-opener and pivoted me from a fairly established big-six audit track in the UK

to a career in international development that has already taken me to four new countries (as homes), and allowed me to work across six continents, from Mongolia to Madagascar. I also met my husband at INSEAD!

“ **The INSEAD difference? The diversity of students and alumni, the one-year programme, the global footprint, and the INSEAD learning journey.**

### **How would you describe INSEAD values?**

I attended INSEAD during the 9/11 attacks and the dot.com bust. This posed challenges in many aspects, but the student body pulled together — formally and informally — and supported each other. I was struck by the values the INSEADers share: they are open, inquisitive, driven— with no fear of being different — and these values are reinforced during the year.

### **What makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

The diversity of students and alumni, the one-year programme, the global footprint, and the INSEAD 'learning journey.' The demographic diversity is complemented by an amazing expanse of differing dreams, goals, paths and post-INSEAD achievements. INSEAD was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, from the academics to friendships I made — from the unforgettable experiences (travel, learning to ski and golf from fellow students, dining in local castles...) to the life learnings. I am still inspired and humbled by the achievements of my classmates.

### **What advice would you give to current INSEAD students?**

Make the most of every aspect of INSEAD. It's not only about learning the maximum in the excellent classes, and positioning oneself for the immediate future — but also about taking advantage of the vast opportunities for new experiences with your fellow students, beyond the classroom. It was a year of many firsts for me.

## Vishal Dembla

MBA'07D

Vice President & General Manager –  
Southeast Asia,  
Turner Asia Pacific

Vishal Dembla is Turner's general manager for its Southeast Asia business. He has full commercial and operational responsibility for all of Turner's networks, digital and media services across the region. Charged with managing and growing Turner's brand portfolio and business lines across linear and non-linear entertainment, Vishal has been instrumental in driving its foray into Asian content and in leading product development for direct-to-consumer platforms. His team is responsible for the media distribution of the business, further expanding the reach of brands including CNN International, Warner TV, TNT, Oh!K, Cartoon Network and Boomerang in Southeast Asia. Prior to joining Turner, Vishal worked in a number of corporate and management roles across the pay-TV and motion picture industries in India.





### **What were you doing before your MBA, and what drew you to INSEAD?**

By the time I decided on a sabbatical, I had been a media executive in India and abroad for about a decade. The desire to expand my worldview, and to develop the full toolkit to operate successfully in multicultural environment, drew me to an MBA. INSEAD provided the perfect platform because of the extremely diverse composition of both the student body and the faculty — it was one of only two schools that I applied to. The one-year programme was also a key driver, as I already knew what I wanted to do after graduation.

### **What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA? Business Knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

INSEAD is the decision that 'keeps on giving'. While on campus, I especially appreciated the cultural experience, the friendships, the business insights, and the extremely responsive alumni who helped me with advice

and contacts. After graduation, INSEAD has proven to be an excellent brand for career advancement. The alumni network continues to be an incredible resource to draw upon.

### **How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

Beyond the academic programme itself, the opportunity to befriend, work with, and learn from fellow professionals from such a wide range of nationalities and cultures has proven to be extremely important. It's one thing to read and hear about the exemplary diversity at INSEAD, but nothing matches the experience itself.

### **How has INSEAD's global alumni network been important to you?**

Both on and off campus, the alumni network has consistently been a rich and accessible resource. For example, during my student days, alumni helped me land my internship. And even today, when looking for the answer to a business question or challenge, I reach out to fellow alumni — with excellent results.

“ After graduation, INSEAD has proven to be an excellent brand for career advancement.

### **In your opinion, what makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

First, its multiple campuses indicated to me a wealth of knowledge and experiences, across both developed and developing economies. Second, the one-year programme reduced opportunity cost. Finally, the multicultural environment was unparalleled. These factors made INSEAD totally unique for me.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to a current MBA student at INSEAD, what would that be?**

The year goes by in a flash. The classroom is only one part of it — immerse yourself in everything else INSEAD has to offer, as well!

## Xania Wong

MBA'06D

Founder and CEO

JOBDOH

Xania Wong is founder and CEO of JOBDOH, an award-winning smart-hiring platform that connects employers with curated on-demand talent in a critical time frame. JOBDOH has been featured by major press and media such as CNBC, and is the exclusive app platform for Manpower Services Group (Greater China), the world's third largest listed HR solutions company. In addition to three entrepreneurial ventures, Xania gained her professional experience in Canada and Hong Kong as an investment analyst, a management consultant, and a product/business manager, working with regional stock exchanges on key product launches. A CFA charter holder, Xania is also passionate about wines and runs Xantana Wine Ltd. – teaching about wines and working in vineyards around the world.



**Where were you before your MBA, and what drew you to INSEAD?**

I was in Canada at the time I applied. For me, the international aspect of INSEAD was important in that it provided a springboard back to Asia, as well as the tools to work optimally in today's global world. After comparison with various other MBA programmes, INSEAD was the natural choice.

**What was the greatest thing you gained from your INSEAD MBA? Business knowledge? A multicultural experience? Career advancement or redirection? Lifelong friendships?**

It may sound like a cliché, but the people made all the difference! I not only had world-class professors; I was also humbled by the extremely bright and equally kind classmates around me. Even today, I cannot emphasise how much their friendship – and the powerful network – has continued to help me grow professionally and personally. It speaks volumes that I can ring up an alumnus for a drink in almost any city around the world (most recently, Yangon!). In addition, INSEAD's strong entrepreneurial community makes

it easy to bounce ideas off like-minded alumni who also converted from the corporate world to entrepreneurship.

“ **INSEAD provided a springboard back to Asia, as well as the tools to work optimally in today's global world.**

**How did INSEAD prepare you for an international career?**

Being placed in – and working intensively with – a study group with classmates from four different countries (and professions!) made it imperative for me to learn about operating with cultural sensitivities to achieve optimal results. And after graduation, the INSEAD network has been instrumental in helping me expand my business internationally.

**How has INSEAD's global alumni network been important to you?**

It offers tremendous support and opportunities for career growth. I run two businesses. For one

of them, I source materials from a classmate in South Africa. Meanwhile, the other business became the first Asia Pacific investment funded by an INSEAD alumni-led fund. Getting in touch with alumni in Taiwan, Myanmar, Singapore, and Indonesia has also helped me grow my business. Not to mention that it is always a pleasure to grab a tippie with alumni who come through Hong Kong!

**In your opinion, what makes INSEAD unique among top business schools?**

Its diversity, its entrepreneurial spirit, and its 'business as a force for good' approach. All of these elements are critical to not only sustain, but to outperform in today's global environment.

**What advice would you give to current INSEAD students?**

Open your heart, and take the time to get to know your classmates personally. There's no substitute for the lifelong friendship that follows.



## National Alumni Association Hong Kong Executive Committee Members

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For the first time, NAA Hong Kong hosted the INSEAD Forum Asia in November 2017.

For more details about this event, visit: [blogs.insead.edu/hongkong-iaa](https://blogs.insead.edu/hongkong-iaa)  
visit: [www.insead.edu/events/alumni-forum-asia-2017](https://www.insead.edu/events/alumni-forum-asia-2017) or scan this:



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