

STORIES FROM UPPER MANAGEMENT

A PATH FULL OF CHALLENGES

Senior managers around the world face a range of hurdles on a daily basis. And they share similar challenges that go from refining their leadership styles to finding their missions in society. Six recent graduates of IESE's AMP program tell their stories.

In a business environment as dynamic, connected and demanding as today's, top executives spend the early stages of their careers handling one project after another at break-neck speed. Fifteen years in, many of them stop and take stock, giving themselves time to reflect on their life goals, their future professional plans and the skills that they still need to develop. The inspiring environment offered by IESE's Advanced Management Program (AMP) makes it possible for managers to share their ideas and concerns with other participants from around the world and have a transformational experience they'll remember for the rest of their lives. The AMP is offered in five cities: Barcelona, Munich, New York, Sao Paulo and Warsaw. And IESE's associated schools offer programs in Abidjan (MDE Business School), Lagos (Lagos Business School) and Nairobi (Strathmore Business School).

"I needed a broader view of my environment"

EXPANDING HORIZONS: STEPHAN BODE

● **Stephan Bode** (AMP Munich '16), managing director of Schleifring Group, seemed predestined for a career in technology. His great grandfather cofounded the company that eventually acquired Schleifring, a German firm specializing in the production of parts for high-frequency energy and data transmission. **Bode's** presence in the group means that a fourth generation of his family is passing through the company.

"When I started to choose my university education my father didn't interfere. He said that I could freely pick whichever field I was interested in," **Bode** explains. "But I was happy to go into mechanical engineering. The prospect of being my own boss always seemed very attractive to me," he adds.

"Basically there are no constraints for family members who want to join the company; however, the statutes are very explicit on the prerequisites. You have to be qualified and have gathered significant experience in other jobs. So I worked for consulting companies for five years and did a postgraduate MBA in the Netherlands. In 2002, I felt ready to join Schleifring. To get a really good insight into the core of the company, I decided to join the sales team, traveling all over the world. I wanted to gradually grow into the role of CEO," explains **Bode**.

And why choose a program like the AMP now, after ten years on the Board and with all his homework done? For **Bode**, the key is in expanding horizons. He explains, "In the end, it's like with everyone in my position: you move in a rather limited world. You know your competitors, you talk to your suppliers, you talk to customers. At some point, I was craving to get a bigger picture again and broaden my horizons."

In the AMP, "it's not like you go to class and come home with learning points A, B and C. Many new perspectives grow during class discussions with your peers. In my class, I found leaders from all kinds of industries and they all approach the decision process in different ways. The program provides you with a spark that ignites something. On one hand, I got several new ideas for my business, as well

STEPHAN BODE
(AMP MUNICH '16)
Managing director of
Schleifring Group



NEURI FRIGOTTO PEREIRA
(AMP SAO PAULO '16)
Operations director of
Coca-Cola FEMSA





VICENTE CUNA
(SEP '16)
President of Philippine Savings Bank

as insights on issues I needed to address in my own company. On the other hand, I also developed a new impetus to implement the ideas I already had, but had never put into action,” adds **Bode**.

“Everyone has something to contribute; my job is to discover what it is”

ENCOURAGING TALENT: NEURI FRIGOTTO PEREIRA

● From the beginning of her career, **Neuri Frigotto Pereira** (AMP Sao Paulo '16), operations director for Coca-Cola FEMSA, was sure that she wanted to be involved in management: “For me it’s always been something very natural,” she explains. “My plan was to study civil engineering, get enough experience in consulting and then keep making progress toward general management positions. This kind of journey has always interested me and I’ve enjoyed it immensely: the daily life of management, solving problems and relating to other professionals.”

She worked for 36 years as the head of marketing and sales at the Brazilian company SPAIPA, until joining Coca-Cola FEMSA as Operations Director in 2013. “The company gave me the opportunity to pursue the AMP at IESE, but the truth is that at the outset I didn’t know what new knowledge it was going to provide beyond the MBA that I did in Brazil in 2003.”

“The experience has been very enriching and revealing,” explains **Frigotto Pereira**. “Although the content is relatively similar to what I had studied, the methodology is completely different and I’ve been able to exchange very interesting experiences and ideas with high-level participants from all over the world and all kinds of sectors. They all offer different viewpoints on the same problem in the classroom, and that’s very powerful.”

She describes it as an experience that can make personal goals more attainable: “My objective as a leader is to be someone who can make a difference, not only in business but also for the people I work with. Everyone has something to contribute; my job is to discover what it is, bring it to light and help people give the best of themselves.”

“It’s like getting a new pair of glasses that allow me to look at business with a 360-degree view”

FROM MANAGER TO LEADER: VICENTE CUNA

● “When I started working, all I wanted was to be a banker, and an excellent one. Then I realized that what I was doing was leading.” This is how **Vicente Cuna** (SEP '16), president of Philippine Savings Bank, recalls his first steps in the business world. Educated as an economist in the Philippines, he has amassed vast experience, first in the

American banking sector and later in his home country. “I found fulfillment working with people, getting things done through collaboration and developing others to be good managers themselves. What I have found most fulfilling in my career is when I see my managers evolve into leaders. In turn, these leaders take other managers under their wing. It’s a virtuous cycle.”

According to **Cuna**, “For a business to stay relevant, people must be at the heart of what it does. There’s no other way. Technologies change. Markets change. Management principles change. The one thing that stays constant is the ultimate purpose of business—which is to enhance human experience and quality of life,” he adds.

Cuna opted for the AMP (called SEP on the New York campus) at this stage of his career because he noticed a great confluence of factors that were speeding up the global economy: “For me, it’s been 30 years since graduate school and the pace of change in the world, particularly Asia, has been accelerating. So I needed a framework for understanding global trends and some perspective on how these trends are affecting the way we run our businesses.”

“I expected to get fresh perspective on business issues, both from the professors and my co-participants. I am very satisfied. It’s not so much the capabilities acquired or developed. What I got is a framework for understanding current business issues and being able to appreciate diverse perspectives on these issues. It’s like getting a new pair of glasses that allow me to look at business with a 360-degree view.”

“I was looking for a breath of fresh air and I discovered that the AMP was the ideal program for my situation”

FILLING UP THE TANK: SONIA BONFIGLIOLI

● **Sonia Bonfiglioli** (AMP Barcelona ’16), chairwoman of Bonfiglioli Riduttori, chose to study mechanical engineering in order to join her family’s tech company as quickly as possible. “The first thing I needed was to have at least the same technical skills as any of the company’s employees or engineers,” she recalls. “After university, I decided to pursue an MBA in Bologna in 1992 to complete my business training. Then I joined the company.”

“After more than 20 years running the company and also being the chairperson since 2010, the year my father died, I realized that I had used all of the skills that I had developed during my entire career,” she explains. “My brain is my gas tank and I was running on empty. So I told myself that it was the perfect time for a change, to find something new and fill up the tank.” At this turning point in her career, **Bonfiglioli** also decided to leave her position as company CEO and maintain only her representative role as chairwoman, in order to concentrate on



SONIA BONFIGLIOLI
(AMP BARCELONA '16)
Chairwoman of Bonfiglioli Riduttori

CROSSROADS

her next step. She notes, “When I arrived at IESE, I didn’t have anything specific in mind. I was just looking for a breath of fresh air and I discovered that the AMP was the ideal program for my situation. I wanted to understand better how new technologies and overarching trends are affecting the world. And I found much more than I was expecting: a much clearer and more global perspective on my company and my role as leader, something that’s vital for motivating and bringing out the best in all members of the organization.”

“It’s not just a question of competencies or knowledge; the fact of sharing the experience of the AMP with other managers in similar situations is very enriching and stimulating. It forces all team members to adapt, to open their minds and to bring creative solutions to problems that we tackle together. Finally, the IESE itself, as a model of an organization committed to a clear mission, has also been a major discovery for me.”

“I don’t think I’ve undergone a metamorphosis, but my time in the AMP has influenced me a lot”

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: RADOSLAW KWASNICKI

- When **Radoslaw Kwasnicki** (AMP Warsaw ’16),
- managing partner at RKKW Law Firm, studied law in

Poland and Germany, he didn’t imagine that he would become a noted business leader and board member to some of his country’s most important companies.

“I wasn’t planning to be a businessman,” he recalls. “I studied law to work as a lawyer, which is still a main part of my activities and one that I’m passionate about. But over time I’ve discovered a great fascination with management. On one hand, our law firm has been developing and growing as a company. And on the other hand, many of my customers began to ask for my support as a member of the board of directors. And that’s why I now serve as a non-executive board member for companies from around the country in various sectors. It’s something that happened without me planning it and I enjoy it a lot at both a professional and a personal level.”

With such a diverse record and in an environment where change is the norm, **Kwasnicki** has always kept in mind the need for ongoing training. “I decided to pursue the AMP at IESE in order to acquire new knowledge,” he notes, “but also to have some time to think – about myself, my activities, my priorities and my personal and professional development. And I have been able to meet all of these goals in the program. I think some of the aspects related to the economy have been extremely interesting. But what has been the most useful to me are the aspects related to negotiations, leadership and business restructuring.”



RADOSLAW KWASNICKI
(AMP WARSAW '16)
Managing partner at RKKW

“In addition, I have confirmed that making decisions quickly is dangerous. I have a much broader perspective and I have much more respect for people, consequences and values. I don’t think I’ve undergone a metamorphosis, but my time in the AMP has influenced me a lot in how I see business. Before, for example, I knew how important people and human relationships were in the organization, but I had never deeply studied this aspect. At IESE, I have confirmed that people are the most important part of a company, and I plan to expand this perspective and share with my business partners in the coming years.”

“I hope to continue improving so that I can leave an enduring legacy”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: CELESTIN RWABUKUMBA

● Educated as an economist in the U.S. and having spent
● the first part of his career as a broker in New York, **Celestin Rwabukumba** (AMP Pan African '15), CEO of the Rwanda Stock Exchange, decided to return to Kigali in 2004 to work at his country’s central bank. In 2011, he took the helm of the recently inaugurated stock exchange, which five years later continues to progress and evolve along with the Rwandan economy. “I have always felt in my DNA a very special motivation for leadership,” notes

Rwabukumba. “I wanted to make a difference and contribute to making the world a better place. The only way to do so, in my case, has been to become a leader and make sure that I could make influential decisions in my field.”

Rwabukumba undertook the AMP at the Strathmore Business School, the Kenyan school of management founded with support from IESE. The Barcelona campus hosts one of the program’s modules, which is also attended by participants in the AMP at Lagos Business School, IESE’s associated school in Nigeria. In his previous education, **Rwabukumba** describes a nearly exclusive focus on academic content in lecture format. “I had been able to apply some of the theories that I had learned, but until I started the AMP, I had never had such a powerful experience in which you can interact with professors from the real business world and with a set of participants of such a high caliber who have such diverse, global and rich backgrounds.”

“Professionally, at the AMP I found exactly what I was looking for, and personally I have also experienced a major development in my priorities. IESE’s focus on the person helps you reflect on the importance of culture in an organization. It’s about defining it and deciding where and how you want to lead it. From here, I hope to be able to continue improving in order to leave an enduring legacy and contribute to improving our world, even if my contribution is only a drop in the ocean.”

CELESTIN RWABUKUMBA
(AMP PAN AFRICAN '15)
Rwanda Stock Exchange CEO

